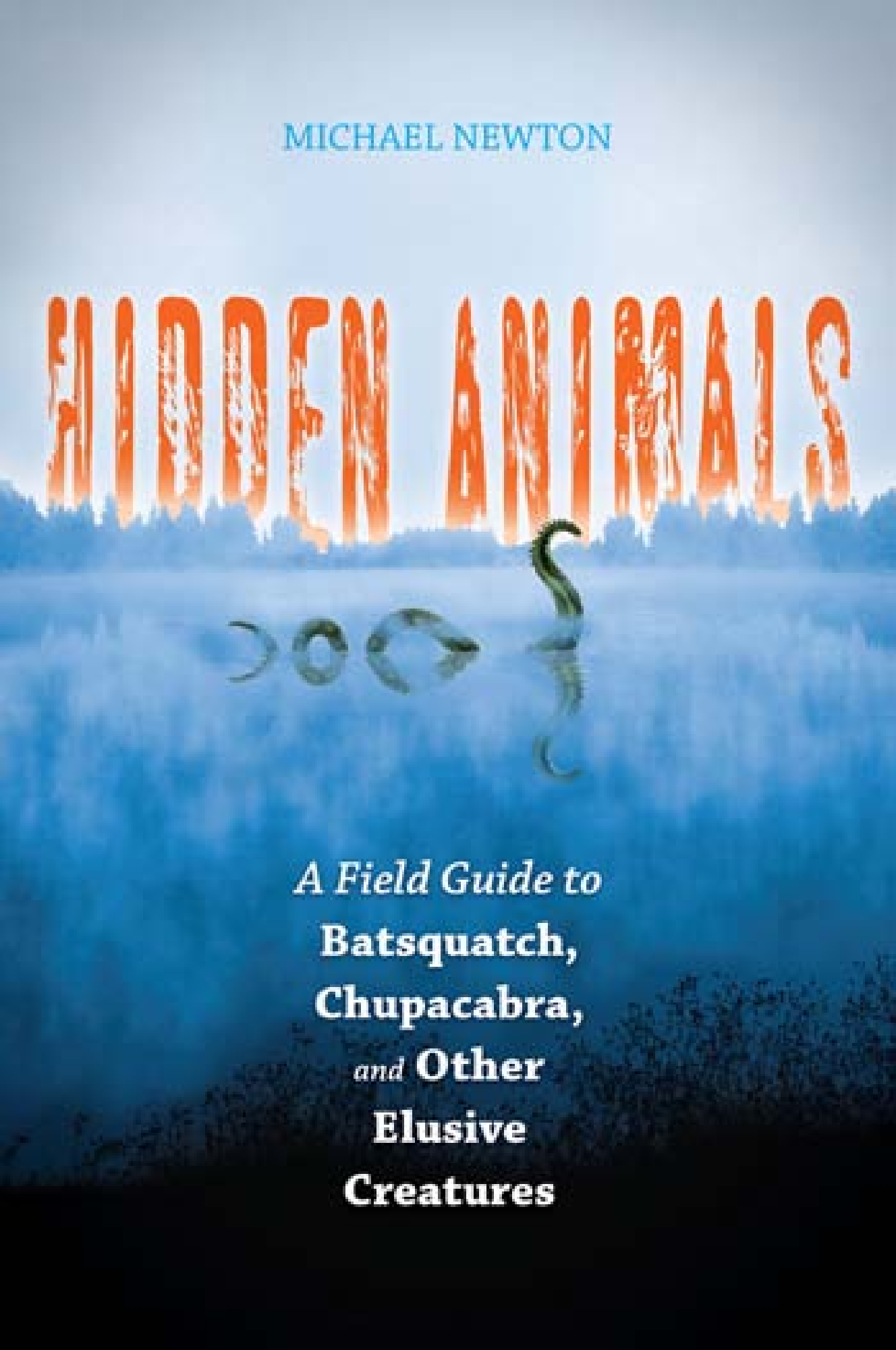
MICHAEL NEWTON

HIDDEN ANIMALS



A Field Guide to
Batsquatch, Chupacabra,
and **Other Elusive Creatures**

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A Field Guide to Batsquatch, Chupacabra, and Other Elusive Creatures

Michael Newton

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In memory of Bernard Heuvelmans

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PREFACE

Hidden Animals explores a world of animals unrecognized by modern science. Some are said to be extinct, although reported sightings still continue to the present day. Others have been described, sketched, photographed, and filmed by many witnesses, but have evaded all attempts to capture them for scientific study. Skeptics say that none of them truly exist. This book collects the evidence and lets readers decide that question for themselves.

The audience for *Hidden Animals* includes anyone interested in nature or unsolved mysteries. Its purpose is to survey eyewitness reports and other evidence suggesting that unknown or extinct species still inhabit the planet today. To balance the account, the arguments of skeptics and some documented hoaxes have been included.

In these pages you will find 93 creatures separated into eight categories. Each entry includes background information on the animal, including eyewitness accounts and any physical evidence collected by researchers. Each selection includes recommendations for further reading, and a selected bibliography may be found at the end of the book. Also included is a glossary defining certain terms used in the text and a "Who's Who" of cryptozoology.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1812, Baron Georges Cuvier—a French zoologist often described as the father of paleontology—declared that science had classified all large animals on earth. "There is little hope," he wrote, "of discovering new species of large quadrupeds." As for reported sea monsters, Cuvier added, "I hope nobody will ever seriously look for them in nature; one could as well search for the animals of Daniel or for the beast of the Apocalypse."

Before his death in 1832, Cuvier saw his opinion proved wrong by the discovery of the American tapir (1819) and whale shark (1828). Other zoological surprises recorded in defiance of Cuvier's dictum include the chimpanzee (1834), lowland gorilla (1847), giant squid (1857), giant panda (1868), Cotton's white rhinoceros (1900), mountain gorilla (1902), giant forest hog (1904), Komodo dragon (1912), Philippine crocodile (1935), megamouth shark (1976), Queen of Sheba's gazelle (1985), Schomburgk's deer (1991), Vu Quang ox (1992), giant muntjac (1994), and leaf muntjac (1997).

In short, Cuvier was mistaken. At the time he made his rash prediction, science recognized 5,738 species of animals worldwide. By 2000, 1.8 *million* species were known, and scientific estimates of those remaining to be found ranged from 2–20 million. Frederick Grassle, director of Rutgers University's Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, estimated in 2005 that the world's oceans contain 10 million unknown species. To underscore this point, consider the following: marine biologists aboard the research ship *Tangaroa* found 400 new species during a two-week survey off New Zealand's coastline in June 2003.

Still, some zoologists insist that no major species remain to be found on land. That view is challenged by researchers such as Marc van Roosmalen, whose 21st-century discoveries include six new monkey species, the dwarf manatee, dwarf porcupine, and giant collared peccary.

The pursuit of wildlife ignored or discounted by mainstream science is called cryptozoology—literally, the study of hidden animals. The term first saw print in 1959, when French author Lucien Blancou dedicated a new book to Belgian researcher Bernard Heuvelmans, whom he called "the master of cryptozoology." Heuvelmans, in turn, claimed

credit for coining the term, but also acknowledged its independent invention by British naturalist Ivan Sanderson.

Whatever its source, cryptozoology has been hotly debated from its founding through the present day. Critics dismiss it as a pseudo-science, ridiculing witnesses and even those researchers who hold doctorates and teach at major universities. To counteract such negativity, professionals from Europe, North America, and Asia formed the International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC) in 1982, with Dr. Heuvelmans as president. The ISC published an annual peer-reviewed journal, *Cryptozoology*, reporting new discoveries and research in the field. Financial problems and Dr. Heuvelmans's death forced the ISC to disband, but its work is carried on today by the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club (founded in 1989 by Dr. Paul LeBlond, James Clark, and John Kirk) and by Britain's Centre for Fortean Zoology (founded by Jonathan Downes in 2005).

Whether professionals or amateurs, cryptozoologists debate which creatures are deserving of their time and energy. John Wall, writing to the ISC's newsletter in 1983, proposed the term *cryptid* to replace the negative monster label often applied to unknown or legendary animals. The ISC's first gathering agreed that cryptozoology concerns "the possible existence of *known* animals in areas where they are not supposed to occur (either now or in the past) as well as the unknown persistence of presumed extinct animals to the present time or to the recent past. . . . What makes an animal of interest to cryptozoology . . . is that it is *unexpected*." To that definition, Dr. Heuvelmans added a provision that creatures "must be of an *appreciable size*," later suggesting that his guideline "should perhaps be supplemented by that of *abnormal size* within a certain group."

In 1985, ISC secretary J. Richard Greenwell proposed a system of classification dividing cryptids into seven groups. Researcher Chad Arment produced the first textbook on cryptozoology in 2004 and reduced Greenwell's list to four major types:

- Animals resembling known living species, with significant variations in size, color, or form.
- Members of known living species found far from their normal geographical range.
- Creatures resembling species extirpated or officially extinct.
- Animals with no resemblance to species recognized by science, either living or extinct.

While examples from each group are well documented, skeptics maintain that most—or all—sightings of cryptids today spring from hoaxes, delusions, or misidentification of known species. The modern world, they say, is too well explored and densely populated to hide large unknown creatures.

Are they correct? A series of 21st-century discoveries suggests otherwise.

- November 2001: Scientists in Ecuador discovered a 123,500-acre "virgin forest never before seen by humans."
- February 2003: Satellite photos revealed 1,000 previously unknown islands in the Indonesian archipelago. Humans inhabit only 6,000 of Indonesia's 18,000 islands.
- December 2005: Scientists found a jungle lost world on Papua New Guinea, and reported the discovery of 40 new animal species and a bird seen only once before—in 1897.

In December 2002, Conservation International reported that 46 percent of Earth's land surface—more than 26.3 million square miles—qualified as wilderness, a term denoting blocks of 3,800 square miles or more with 70 percent of their original vegetation intact and fewer than 10 human inhabitants per square mile. Skeptics reply that, while this may be true for parts of Asia, Africa, or South America, the same cannot be said for more developed nations of the world where cryptids frequently appear, but, once again, examination of a map suggests that they are wrong.

Canada covers more than 3.9 million square miles, with an average population density of eight persons per square mile—but even that figure misleads us, as 46 percent of all Canadians live in one of nine large cities, all of which are within 100 miles of the U.S. border. When we subtract urban-dwellers from Canada's total, its population density plummets to 4.7 persons per square mile. Ninety percent of British Columbia is virtually uninhabited, and the northern provinces are wilder yet: the Yukon Territory has 16 humans per 100 square miles; the Northwest Territories boast seven per 100 square miles; and Nunavut (formerly the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories) has only three per 100 square miles.

The United States is far more crowded, with an average 80 persons per square mile, but once again large urban populations skew the statistics. Nationwide, huge tracts of wilderness remain largely unexplored. Some surprising examples include:

- Northern California: While boasting some of the state's largest cities, this region also contains 5,100 square miles of forest. In 1961, Ivan Sanderson discovered that the area had last been surveyed (from canoes) in 1859. Aerial photos complete modern maps but reveal no wildlife beneath the treetops.
- Montana: In July 2002, the *New York Times* described "America's wildest valley," along the Flathead River adjoining Glacier National Park. Statewide, Montana's population density is only 3.9 persons per square mile.
- Nevada: While the state claims a population density of 22.5 persons per square mile, 69 percent of all Nevadans live in two of 17 counties, leaving the rest with seven persons per square mile. Vast tracts of desert are completely uninhabited.
- The Southeast: Florida has 18 million full-time residents and welcomes 84 million tourists per year, but few probe its 1,032 swamps. Moving west along the Gulf of Mexico, one can find 459 swamps in Georgia, 95 in Alabama, 126 in Mississippi, and 300 in Louisiana. Some shelter wildlife once thought native only to Africa and South America.

Cryptozoology rewards those who pursue it in various ways. Some hunt for profit: a $50,000 reward from the Wildlife Conservation Society awaits the first person to capture a 30-ft. snake, and the tracker who proves Bigfoot's existence might earn millions. For others, the hunt is enough simply by adding adventure to their lives. Those who succeed in locating new species feel a sense of personal accomplishment.

In broader terms, cryptozoology matters to everyone on earth. According to a 1998 survey conducted by the American Museum of Natural History, 69 percent of 400 leading biologists believe that the planet is in the early stages of a mass extinction caused by human beings. Those scientists estimated that one-fifth of all living species could be

extinct by 2038. In 2002, biologist Edward Wilson predicted that, if current trends in habitat destruction continue, half of all species on earth will be extinct within 100 years.

In order to protect new species, some of which are almost certainly endangered now, those species first must be located and identified. The urgency of that pursuit increases with rare creatures, who are on the verge of dying out. For some species it may already be too late, but we will never know unless we try.

Despite the nay-sayers, we live in a world of possibilities. The days of exploration and discovery are not yet behind us. If we never seek, we cannot find. Cryptozoologists devote—and sometimes sacrifice—their lives to that unending quest. You have an opportunity to watch them in these pages and decide if, someday, you might like to join them in the field.

1

TOO BIG, TOO SMALL

Cryptozoology is not concerned with isolated freaks. Two-headed calves and similar unfortunates make news at birth, and then pass from the limelight to lead short, unhappy lives. Science understands their deformity and spends no time on them unless a trend suggests a risk to humans or their livestock from environmental factors, such as chemical pollution. Cryptozoologists, meanwhile, focus on creatures that resemble some known species, but with a twist—giants or pygmies sighted time and time again, over long spans of time and distance. Do they represent mutations capable of breeding, or perhaps are they new species presently unknown? No final answer is apparent in the cases surveyed here.

GIANT FISH

Fishermen are notorious for exaggerating the sizes of "the ones that got away"—so much so, in fact, that lies are often called "fish tales." Nonetheless, some giant fish *are* known to science, and reports of huge unknown species are a staple of cryptozoology. The earth's largest-ever fish was the *Leedsichthys*, a predator known from late-Jurassic fossils whose length is estimated at 50–90 ft. by various paleontologists. While science recognizes no such giants presently alive, some fish of a prodigious size remain. Marine species include:

- Whale sharks, presumed to be the largest living fish on earth. The record specimen, caught in 1947 off the coast of Pakistan, measured 41.5 ft. and weighed 47,300 lbs. Stories persist of whale sharks measuring 50–70 ft., but none have been verified.
- Basking sharks, earth's second-largest fish, with a record specimen 40 ft. 3 in. long caught in Canada's Bay of Fundy in 1851. Unverified Scandinavian reports claim specimens up to 45.5 ft., but most basking sharks fall in the range of 20–26 ft.
- Great white sharks, made infamous by the *Jaws* novels and films, commonly reach lengths of 13–16 ft. and most experts agree that the largest reliably-measured specimen was a 21-footer caught near Cuba in 1945. BBC photo analysts report that

a supposed 23-ft. specimen caught off Malta and photographed in 1987 was actually 18.3 ft. long. Likewise, the claim of a 37-ft. specimen caught in Australian waters in the 1870s was disproved 100 years later, when examination of its jaws suggested a maximum length of 17 ft., inflated by careless record-keeping.

- Megamouth sharks, discovered in 1976 and known only from 39 specimens, have a confirmed record size of 16 ft., although a specimen estimated at 20–25 ft. was caught and released off the California coast in May 2003.

Some freshwater fish species also reach impressive sizes. The largest recognized by science include:

- Sturgeon, found in rivers, lakes, and coastal waters throughout the northern hemisphere, including 26 species with two confirmed giants among them. Eurasia's beluga sturgeon, known for its eggs that become caviar, is the largest known freshwater fish. The Fishing World Records Web site lists a specimen 29.5 ft. long, while the largest confirmed white sturgeon (found in North America) measured 22 ft. Some sturgeon live for 100 years, and German biologist Karl von Baer (1792–1876) claimed life spans exceeding 210 years, based on "direct observations" in Russia.
- *Paraiba,* a catfish found in the Amazon River, holds the official record for freshwater fish in South America. The largest specimen on record measured 11.8 ft. and weighed 440 lbs.

A 188-pound sturgeon, caught by Wisconsin fisherman David Piechowski in 2004. (AP Photo/Mark Hoffman)

- Chinese paddlefish inhabit the Yangtze River and its tributaries. In January 2007, poachers killed a specimen 11.7 ft. long and weighing 550 lbs. Scientists generally dismiss reports of 23-ft. paddlefish.
- Mekong giant catfish, found in Southeast Asia, rank next in size among Asian species. The largest confirmed specimen, caught in May 2005, measured 8.7 ft. and weighed 646 lbs.
- Wels catfish, native to Europe, is that continent's second-largest freshwater species (after sturgeons). The World Fishing Records Web site claims a record length of 18 ft., but most sources are more conservative, citing a 9.9-ft. Romanian specimen as the largest on record. It tipped the scales at 440 lbs. Investigators from the Centre for Fortean Zoology believe that Britain's elusive "Monster of Martin Mere," sighted in 2002, was probably a wels catfish.

- Alligator gar rank as the largest North American fish and are confined exclusively to fresh water. The current record-holding specimen, pulled from the Rio Grande River in 1951, was 10 ft. long and weighed 279 lbs.

While the species on record are impressive, reports of *much* larger fish persist from various parts of the world. In the United States, accounts of huge man-eating catfish date from 1780, when one such monster reportedly devoured a man on the Ohio River. Stories from the 1970s, unconfirmed by any solid evidence, describe a Kentucky catfish found with a human infant in its stomach; a 10-year-old boy eaten at Troy, Indiana; and a fisherman drowned by a huge catfish near Metropolis, Illinois. Author Loren Coleman reports sightings of catfish 9–25 ft. long from the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, as well as lakes in California and Arizona. Bolivia's Lake Origuere produces reports of huge fish that capsize canoes, while visitors to Lake Hanas, in northwestern China, claimed sightings of 30-ft. salmon in 1985.

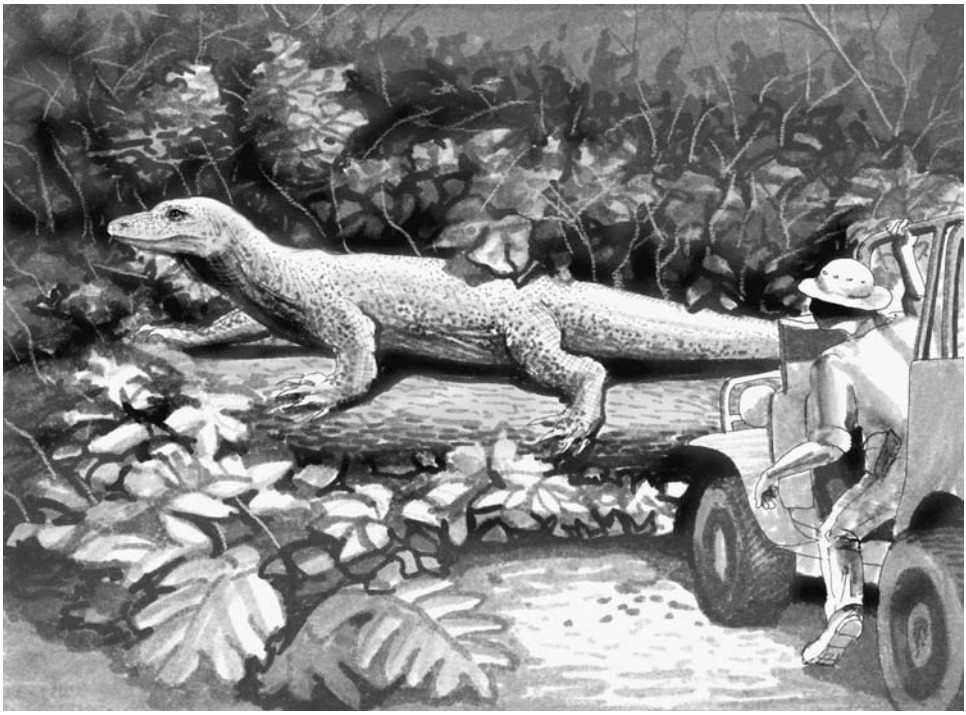
Further Reading: Brunvand, J. *American Folklore,* (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 130–32; Coleman, L. *Mysterious America*, (New York: Paraview Press, 2001), pp. 91–96; Ellis, R. *The Book of Sharks*. (New York: Knopf, 1989); Fishing World Records, http://www.fishing-world records.com.

GIANT LIZARDS

Lizards are reptiles that belong to the order *Squamata,* which includes 40 families and 4,675 known species. Adult specimens may range in size from under 1 in. to over 10 ft. long. The largest species known to science was *Megalania,* an Australian monitor lizard presumed extinct for 40,000 years. Fossil remains suggest that *Megalania* exceeded 23 ft. in length and weighed more than 4,200 lbs. The largest known lizards surviving today are also monitors, including:

- Komodo dragons, discovered in 1912, inhabiting the Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rinca, Flores, Gili Motang, and Gili Dasami. The largest specimen on record was 10 ft., 3 in. long and weighed 365 lbs.
- Water monitors, found in Southeast Asia, boast a record length of 9.8 ft., but most fall in the range of 4 to 5 ft.
- Parenties, native to Australia, rank third with a record length of 8.1 ft. and an average maximum of 6.5 ft.
- New Guinea's Papua monitor rivals the parentie with a record maximum length of 8 ft., while reports of 15-ft. giants remain unconfirmed.
- Nile monitors are Africa's largest lizards, with a record length of 7 ft. In recent years, specimens released by exotic-pet owners have established breeding colonies in Florida.
- Gould's monitor, an Australian species, has a record length of 4 ft., 7 in. Other species reaching lengths of 3 to 4 ft. include India's Bengal monitor, Africa's savannah monitor, the argus monitor of Australia and New Guinea, and the mangrove monitor of the Solomon Islands.

All monitors are Old World lizards, while the New World's largest species are iguanas. Unlike the predatory monitors, all known iguanas are herbivores. The largest species is



Australian herpetologist Frank Gordon saw an unidentified giant lizard in 1979. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

the green iguana, known to reach 6 ft. and exceeding 22 lbs. in weight. Male marine iguanas may reach 4.2 ft., while the Lesser Antillean iguana grows to a record 32 in.

Reports of lizards dwarfing the Komodo dragon come from every corner of the world. In Africa, at least four nations boast reports of scaly giants. In 1952, Adrian Conan Doyle, son of the author who created Sherlock Holmes, published a big-game hunter's sighting of a lizard 10–12 ft. long, seen near the border of Ethiopia and Sudan. Farther south, in Kenya's Rift Valley province, American missionary Cal Bombay and his wife saw a 12-ft. lizard with a ridge or "sail" along its spine, in 1963. Across the continent, in Cameroon and the Republic of Congo, witnesses have described the *Nguma-monene* as a swamp-dwelling lizard 30–50 ft. long.

India claims two giant lizards—or perhaps the same species seen in different places. Reports of the *buru,* inhabiting swamps of the Apatani Valley, prompted the *London Daily Mail* to fund a search by correspondent Ralph Izzard in 1948, but he returned without hard evidence of the reptile's existence. Earlier in the 20th century, visitors to India's Gir National Park reported the 20-ft. *jhoor* dwelling in rivers and marshland.

Australia's *Megalania* is presumed extinct, but the island continent still produces sightings of lizards 25–30 ft. long. Skeptics dismissed reports from several hikers and a farmer during 1975, but found it difficult to ignore a 1979 sighting by professional herpetologist Frank Gordon, in the Wattagan Mountains of New South Wales. Cryptozoologist Rex Gilroy produced a plaster cast of an apparent giant-lizard footprint in July 1979, but critics regard it as a hoax.

Papua New Guinea allegedly harbors two giant lizard species in addition to the unconfirmed 15-ft. Papua monitors. Zoologist Richard Archbold sponsored three New Guinea explorations between 1933 and 1939, collecting reports of a man-eating 40-ft. lizard known to natives as *artrellia*. In 1961, explorers David George and Robert Grant sighted a long-necked 26-ft. lizard in western New Guinea. December 1999 brought reports of a 20-ft. reptile from Lake Murray, but soldiers sent to hunt the beast found nothing.

Across Europe, witnesses at Ossum, France, claimed sightings of a lizard "several yards long" in May 1939. Italy produced sightings of an 8-ft. lizard in 1935, a 15-ft. specimen in 1969, and a 10-ft. "snake with legs" in 1975. Residents of County Wexford, Ireland also reported a 20-foot lizard at large in 1975.

The United States also has its share of giant lizard sightings. Some are clearly escaped monitors or iguanas, but others are less easily explained. Between 1879 and the 1930s, residents of Arkansas reported multiple sightings of a 20-ft., cave-dwelling lizard they called the Gowrow. Colorado witness Myrtle Snow saw several 7-ft. "baby dinosaurs" around Pagosa Springs between 1935 and 1978. A 15-ft. lizard terrorized residents of Trimble County, Kentucky, in July 1975. Eighteen years later, Texas researcher James Ward collected reports of the Mountain Boomer, described as a "giant lizard that walked on its hind legs and whose voice sounded like the roll of distant thunder."

Further Reading: Gilroy, R. "Giant Lizards of the Australian Bush." *Australasian Ufologist* 4 (2000): 17–20; Izzard, R. *The Hunt for the Buru*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951); Shuker, K. "From Dodos to Dimetrodons." *Strange Magazine* 19 (Spring 1998): 22–23.

GIANT SALAMANDERS

Salamanders are amphibians normally characterized by slender bodies, four short legs, and long tails. Various published sources place the total number of species known worldwide between 400 and 500. While most are relatively small, two large species stand out. The Chinese giant salamander holds the current record, with a maximum-recorded length of 5 ft., 10 in. A close relative, the Japanese giant salamander, may reach 4 ft., 5 in. North America's largest known salamanders are the hellbender (29 in.) and the Pacific giant salamander (13 in.).

In the 1920s, while hunting deer in California's Trinity County, lawyer Frank Griffith reported seeing five huge salamanders, 5–9 ft. long, in an unnamed lake. He allegedly hooked one, but found it too heavy to drag from the water. In 1939, herpetologist George Myers caught a salamander 25–30 in. long in the Sacramento River, and later claimed that it was "unquestionably" a subspecies of the Chinese giant breed. Strangely, Myers did not preserve the specimen and waited 12 years to report the incident. In January 1960, witness Vern Harden allegedly pulled a salamander 8 ft., 4 in. long from a remote lake in California's Trinity Alps and then claimed that a blizzard forced him to abandon his prize.

Such reports have inspired several giant-salamander hunts. Biologist Thomas Rodgers visited the Trinity Alps four times in 1948 but failed to sight a specimen. Brothers Bernard and John Hubbard made two expeditions in 1958–59, then announced in 1960 that they had "definitely established" the existence of huge salamanders in the Trinity Alps, but they never caught one. Also in 1960, Texas oilman Tom Slick diverted members of his latest Bigfoot-hunting party to seek the salamanders, but they found nothing and branded the effort "a silly side trip." September 1960 witnessed a new expedition, mounted by three

zoology professors, but they found only Pacific giant salamanders of a normal size. Tom Rodgers—perhaps embittered by his own failure—denounced the 1960 searches as bungled efforts by "boy scouts" who "mistook logs for salamanders." Cryptozoologist Kyle Mikozami mounted the latest effort to date, in 1997, and was likewise unsuccessful.

Further Reading: Myers, G. "Asiatic Giant Salamander Caught in Sacramento River." *Copeia* 2 (June 1951): 179–80; Rodgers, T. "Report of Giant Salamander in California." *Copeia* 3 (September 1962): 646–47.

GIANT SNAKES

When herpetologists speak of *giant* snakes they mean the "big six": South America's green anaconda and common boa, Asia's reticulated python and Burmese python, the African rock python, and Australia's amethystine python. Most sources cite the reticulated python as the earth's longest snake, although reports of its maximum size disagree. A specimen 32 ft., 9 in. long was reportedly killed on the island of Celebes (now Sulawesi) in 1912, but no proof exists. Likewise, the slaying of a 37.5-ft. anaconda in 1944 remains unproved, since the dead snake revived and escaped. A reward of $50,000 offered by the Wildlife Conservation Society for the first live capture of a snake measuring 30 ft. or longer has yet to be claimed. Meanwhile, reports of truly giant snakes continue ro be made around the world.

- Explorer Percy Fawcett killed a 62-ft. anaconda on the Rio Negro in 1907 and reported the slaying of another more than 80 ft. long on the Rio Paraguay.

Brazilian soldiers battle a giant anaconda. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

- Another Amazon explorer, Algot Lange, shot two anacondas in 1910, reporting that one measured 54 ft. and the other 52 ft., 8 in.
- A Brazilian priest, Fr. Victor Heinz, saw three huge snakes on the Amazon River during 1929–30. He claimed the first was more than 80 ft. long. Heinz said another specimen's eyes were "as large as plates."
- In 1933, members of the Brazil-Colombia Boundary Commission allegedly killed an anaconda 97 ft., 6 in. long but subsequently lost their photos of the monster.
- Also in 1933, Congo tribesmen reportedly killed a 130-ft. python, then cooked and ate it before authorities could measure the reptile.
- Brazilian soldiers killed a 75-ft. anaconda in April 1947 and published its photo in local newspapers.
- Two more Brazilian monsters, both killed in 1948, reportedly measured 130 ft. and 114 ft. The larger one was photographed, but the photo provides no objects from which to gauge size.
- In 1959, Belgian helicopter pilot Remy Van Lierde photographed a snake 40–50 ft. long in the Congo, but, again, the photo includes no details to provide a sense of scale.
- In February 1969, newspapers announced Italian zoologist Bruno Falcci's search for an anaconda "more than 100 ft. long and at least a yard wide," but the snake eluded him.
- Reports from Peru described the rampage of a 130-ft. serpent that destroyed a native village in August 1997.

No snake native to North America officially reaches 10 ft. in length, yet numerous reports of larger snakes have been recorded from Colonial times to the present. Author Chad Arment lists 211 American encounters with snakes 10–40 ft. long reported between 1715 and 1960. In 88 of those cases, the snakes were supposedly captured or killed, but none was preserved. Among the more surprising cases we find:

- *Giant rattlesnakes.* The largest known rattlesnake species on earth, the eastern diamondback, claims a record length of 8 ft., 3 in., but huge rattlers were reportedly killed nationwide throughout the 19th century. Examples include a 20-ft. specimen from Harlan County, Kentucky (1857), a 17-ft. rattler from Medina County, Texas (1858), a snake 21 ft., 6 in. long at Danville, Illinois (1859), an 18-ft. specimen from Eufala, Oklahoma (1877), another 18-ft. rattler at Fort Drum, Florida (1878), a specimen 14 ft., 9 in. long in Dooly County, Georgia (1878), a rattler 14 ft., 3 in. long from Arizona's White Mountains (1879), a 17-ft. snake at Salina, Utah (1893), and a 20-ft. rattler at Anderson, Indiana (1897).
- *1843:* A dark green snake with black spots, measuring 14 ft., 8 in. long, was killed at North Attleboro, Massachusetts.
- *1871:* Residents of Fredonia, Kansas caught a blue-black snake with yellow spots that measured 37 ft., 9 in.
- *1872:* A snake 20 ft., 3 in. long was killed at Loudonville, Ohio.
- *1878:* An unknown greenish-colored snake, 31 ft. long, was killed near Antioch, California.
- *1878:* A farmer at Quapaw Bayou, Louisiana killed a 31-ft. snake that tried to eat one of his calves.

- *1879:* A resident of Carlinville, Illinois killed an 18-ft. snake after it attacked a 3-year-old child.
- *1885:* An 18-ft. snake was killed at Elkhart, Indiana.
- *1887:* A farmer living near Allendale, Pennsylvania killed a snake 16 ft., 6 in. long.
- *1897:* Residents of Lock Springs, Missouri killed a snake 16 ft. long and as thick as a stovepipe.
- *1901:* A snake "over 20 ft." long was killed outside Millbrook, Ohio.
- *1905:* A resident of Columbus, Georgia reportedly killed a 14-ft. coachwhip. The longest member of that species recognized by science measured 8 ft. 6 in.
- *1911:* A 20-ft. snake described as mahogany-colored with gray and gold stripes was caught alive near Cascade, Montana.

Most herpetologists deny that truly giant snakes could move on land. Proponents of the opposite view note that anacondas live primarily in water, which supports their weight.

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GIANT SPIDERS

Next to snakes, spiders generally rank as the creatures most feared and despised by humans. Giant spiders feature prominently in horror films released over the past half-century, but the largest species recognized by science are much smaller. The largest on record, South America's Goliath bird-eating tarantula, boasts a record leg span of 13 in., while two other Brazilian species tie for second place with 10-in. spans. Nonetheless, two stories from the mid-20th century suggest much larger specimens may be abroad in foreign jungles.

Cryptozoologist William Gibbons heard the first story from Margaret Lloyd, who toured the former Belgian Congo with her husband in 1938, soon after their wedding. While driving along a narrow jungle trail, they saw a creature cross in front of them, at first believing that it was a cat or a large monkey. Drawing closer, they realized the beast was a huge spider with legs nearly 3 ft. long. The arachnid disappeared into the jungle while Mrs. Lloyd's husband was trying to unpack his camera.

Five years later, during the battle to reclaim New Guinea from Japanese invaders, an Australian soldier stopped to relieve himself along the mountainous Kakoda Trail. He soon noticed a web some 30 ft. wide and, glancing higher, saw the spider dangling a foot from his face. He described it as jet-black, with a body "the size of a small dog or puppy." It's legs displayed "more bulk than spread," being proportionately shorter than those of Brazil's record tarantulas. The soldier retreated and later told the story to his son, who passed it on to researcher Peter Hynes in 2001.

A third report, filed from the Iraqi war zone in 2004, included an Internet photo of two supposed giant spiders caught by U.S. soldiers near Baghdad. Zoologist Karl Shuker examined the photo, reporting that the creatures were not spiders, but rather solifugids, arachnids with a record 5-in. leg span. The close-up camera angle made these specimens seem larger than normal, until Shuker noted the sleeve of a soldier shown in the photo's foreground.

Most entomologists agree that the normal arachnid respiratory system—described as "book lungs"—limits the growth potential of spiders, threatening true giants with suffocation. The tales from Africa and New Guinea remain unproven, but nonetheless chilling.

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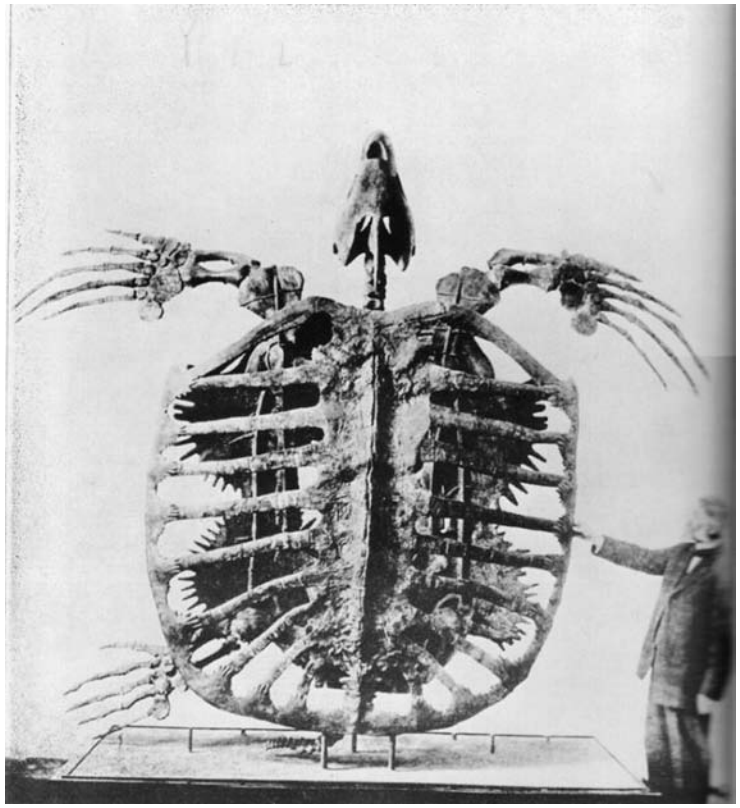
GIANT TURTLES

The largest turtle known to science is *Archelon,* a prehistoric giant of the sea that measured 13 ft. long. Presumed extinct for 70 million years, it left behind some large descendants that include:

- The leatherback turtle, with a record length of 6 ft., 4 in. and a top weight of 2,016 lbs.
- The green turtle, whose record specimen measured 5 ft. and weighed 650 lbs.
- The Aldabra giant tortoise, with a 4-ft. shell and a captive record weight of 793 lbs.
- The Galápagos giant tortoise, a land-dwelling species that boasts a record length of 4 ft. and a top weight of 660 lbs.



The largest turtle known to science is the prehistoric Archelon, believed to be extinct. (Author's collection)

As with the other species examined here, researchers have collected sightings of seagoing turtles far beyond the record size of any leatherback. Christopher Columbus and his crewmen saw a whale-sized turtle in 1494, while on their second voyage to the New World. Bernard Heuvelmans, in his 1968 survey of "sea serpents," isolated seven cases involving what appeared to be huge turtles. Their sightings ranged from the Indian Ocean to Newfoundland and included reports filed by witnesses aboard the ships *Nestor* (1876), *Annie L. Hall* (1883), *Valhalla* (1905), *Ceramic* (1932), and *Rhapsody* (1956). A sixth incident, reported from India's Back Bay, described a creature with a 10-ft. neck and a "head like that of gigantic tortoise or turtle." The last sighting noted by Heuvelmans, from the western coast of Scotland, occurred in 1959.

Heuvelmans missed the sighting by Columbus and another reported from Colombia's Gulf or Urabá in 1955, but he possessed enough data to propose that rare specimens of *Archelon* might still survive in modern times. Most zoologists and paleontologists dispute that theory, while the sightings of huge turtles at sea remain unexplained.

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HOGZILLA

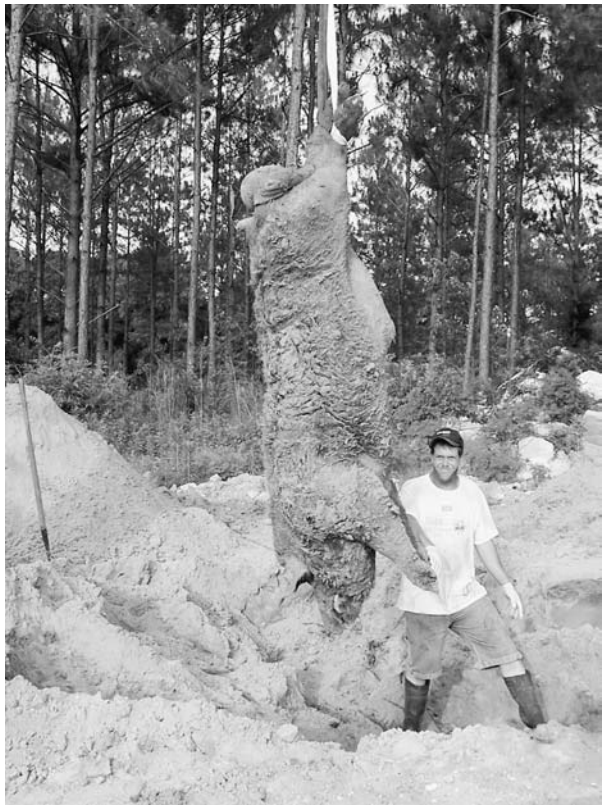
Two kinds of pigs inhabit North American wilderness areas. One, the collared peccary (or *javelina*) is a native species normally found in the Southwest, ranging along the Mexican border in southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. A large adult specimen may be 4 ft. long (tail included), stand 2 ft. tall at the shoulder, and weigh 60 lbs. A larger swine species, the Eurasian wild hog (or "razorback"), was introduced to North America by Spanish explorers in the 16th century. By 2006, they could be found in 39 states and 4 Canadian provinces. Wildlife authorities have described them as a serious threat to the environment, domestic animals, and human beings.

Adult Eurasian boars (males) are normally 5–6 ft. long (tail included), stand 3 ft. tall at the shoulder, and average 150 lbs. in weight, though specimens exceeding 600 lbs. have been shot in the South. Their continuously-growing lower tusks sometimes approach 8 in. in length and may be deadly weapons at close quarters. Wild families of razorbacks (called "sounders") may include 20 to 50 individuals, and will sometimes attack in concert if threatened. Their diet ranges from roots and garbage to fawns, lambs, and calves.

Imagine, then, the terrifying spectacle of a wild hog 10 times normal size, grown to double the size of a man and exceeding 1,000 lbs. That monstrous creature was the wild boar dubbed "Hogzilla" by the media in 2004—and today some theorists speculate that it was not one of a kind.

On June 17, 2004, Chris Griffin went hunting for razorback hogs on a game preserve owned by Ken Holyoak near Alapaha, Georgia. He shot a giant hog, posed beside its hanging carcass for a photograph, and then buried it. When the photo was published, Griffin claimed that the hog was 12 ft. long and weighed 1,000 lbs. Reporters scoffed at first, claiming the picture had been hoaxed by means of Photoshop or similar technology. They dubbed the pig "Hogzilla" after the Japanese movie monster Godzilla that has been portrayed in 29 different films since 1954.

Griffin and Holyoak protested those media stories and invited scientists from the National Geographic Society to examine Hogzilla's remains. Early in 2005, the Society agreed



Georgia hunter Chris Griffin poses with the original "Hogzilla," a half-ton wild hog shot in June 2004. (AP Photo/River Oak Plantation)

to dig up the pig's carcass and perform various tests, broadcasting the results in a television documentary. Their findings, announced on March 22, 2005, confirmed that Hogzilla was huge—but not as large as Griffin and Holyoak claimed. According to the scientists, the boar had actually measured between 7.5 and 8 ft. long and tipped the scales at around 800 lbs. DNA tests also proved that Hogzilla was a hybrid, produced by crossbreeding between a European wild hog and a domestic pig. Its tusks, close to 18 in. long, set a new North American record. Documentary producer Nancy Donnelly said, "He was an impressive beast. He was definitely a freak of nature."

Ken Holyoak denounced the National Geographic measurements as inaccurate. He had weighed Hogzilla on his farm scales, he insisted, and logged the fresh kill's weight at a full 1,000 lbs. Likewise, his measurements confirmed its 12-ft. length before decomposition. Skeptics suggested that Holyoak measured the hog from nose to rear hoof, as it hung from a strap tied around its hind legs, thus adding 4 ft. to the normal standard of nose-to-tail measurement. Nancy Donnelly also insisted that National Geographic's experts had allowed for shrinkage in their estimates. No resolution of the argument was possible, after Hogzilla had been rotting in the ground for half a year.

Two years later, on May 3, 2007, 11-year-old Jamison Stone shot and killed another large feral hog at Lost Creek Plantation, a 2,500-acre hunting preserve outside Anniston,

Alabama. Stone and his father claimed the pig was 9 ft., 4 in. long from its snout to the tip of its tail, and that it weighed 1,051 lbs. Jeff Kinder, owner of the commercial scale where the carcass was weighed, later told reporters that his equipment only measured weights in 10-lb. increments, and that it could not register the precise weight claimed for the pig that reporters called "Hogzilla II" or "Pigzilla."

No later measurements were possible, as the Stones rushed their kill to a local slaughterhouse, where it produced an alleged 500–700 lbs. of sausage. Skeptics questioned the claim, since most hunters deem wild boar's flesh inedible, and Dr. Richard Brandt, a retired physicist from New York University, cast further doubt on the story. Brandt measured published photos of Hogzilla II, using a technique called perspective geometry to judge its size and reported that the pig shown in a photograph with Jamison Stone must be closer to 15 ft. long, based Jamison's known height. The trick, according to Brandt, involved having the boy stand several yards behind the carcass, thereby creating an illusion of great size. Various Internet Web sites now present evidence demonstrating that the "monster pig" photos were digitally altered to inflate Hogzilla II far beyond its true size—whatever that was.

Stranger still, after the latest kill was publicized, Alabama farmers Phil and Rhonda Blissitt contacted reporters and identified Hogzilla II as "Fred," a friendly hog raised from birth on their farm near the hunting preserve. Far from being a ravenous monster, the Blissitts described Fred as a family pet that played with their grandchildren and dined on canned sweet potatoes. Despite that seeming love connection, the Blissitts sold Fred to Lost Creek Plantation four days before he was killed, for use in a "canned" hunt where animals are stalked and shot inside fenced property.

On January 29, 2008, local newspapers announced that a Calhoun County, Alabama grand jury was investigating Jamison Stone and his father for potential violation of animal cruelty laws. District Attorney Fred Thompson later dropped that case, citing "time constraints," but the bad publicity resulted in closure of the Lost Creek Plantation as a canned hunting reserve. Owner Eddy Borden listed the property for sale, telling reporters, "I didn't ask for the publicity. I just want it to all go away."

Rumors of other Hogzillas at large in the South have not gone away. The History Channel's *MonsterQuest* program aired an episode on "mega hogs" in May 2008, claiming that wild pigs nearly the size of Georgia's Hogzilla had been seen in various parts of Texas. Camera traps failed to catch the giants on film, but speculation about their existence persists. Despite the horror film *Razorback* (1984), in which a huge boar terrorizes the Australian Outback, no conclusive evidence exists today of giant hogs on a rampage, in the American South or anywhere else.

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HUMAN GIANTS

The mythology of every culture teems with giants who were either friends or deadly enemies of humans. At the time of this writing, the *Guinness Book of World Records* has named Ukrainian Leonid Stadnyk as the tallest living man on earth, at 8 ft., 5.5 in., as verified in 2006. The previous record-holder was Robert Wadlow of Illinois (1918–40), who stood 8 ft., 11 in. and weighed 439 lbs. Physicians attribute such abnormal size to malfunctioning pituitary glands, which control human growth.

Robert Wadlow, once the world's tallest man, poses with relatives in 1936. (AP Photo)

With this in mind, recorded history abounds with reports of huge human remains, some suggesting whole races of giants rather than mere aberrant individuals. Some locations include:

- *Cumberland, England:* Sometime in the Middle Ages, Hugh Hodson unearthed a grave containing skeletal remains of a man 10 ft., 6 in. tall dressed in full armor. The giant's teeth were reportedly "six inches long and two inches broad."

- *Sayre, Pennsylvania:* In the early 1800s, an ancient burial mound yielded 7-ft. skeletons with bony horns on their brows. They were sent to Philadelphia's "American Investigating Museum"—of which no records remain—then vanished.
- *Tennessee:* In 1821, Williams County residents found "very large" human bones in "stone graves," while "ancient fortifications" in White County revealed 7-ft. human skeletons.
- *Lompoc, California:* Soldiers discovered a human skeleton 11 ft., 9 in. tall, buried with stone axes, carved shells, and other artifacts. The skull possessed a double row of teeth.
- *Wisconsin:* Dr. J.N. DeHart found human vertebrae "larger than those of the present type" in 1876.
- *Kansas City:* W.H. Lykins unearthed skull fragments "of great size and thickness" in 1877.
- *Brewersville, Indiana:* Laborers uncovered a human skeleton 9 ft., 8 in. tall, wearing a stone necklace, in 1879. The land's owner, "Mr. Robinson," reported the skeleton lost in a 1937 flood.
- *Zanesville, Ohio:* A Dr. Everhart found a skeleton "of enormous dimensions" inside a clay coffin, with a sandstone tablet bearing hieroglyphics, in 1880.
- *Warren, Minnesota:* In May 1883, excavators found 10 skeletons "of both sexes and of gigantic size" in a burial mound.
- *Eureka, Nevada:* Prospectors found leg bones measuring 39 in. from knee to heel in July 1887. Reports that they dated from the Jurassic period suggest the bones were not human.
- *Clearwater, Minnesota:* In June 1888, a burial mound yielded seven skeletons 7–8 ft. tall, each with double rows of teeth in both jaws.
- *Crittenden, Arizona:* Workmen uncovered an empty 12-ft. sarcophagus in 1891. Its carved lid depicted a giant man with six toes on each foot.
- *Ohio:* On December 17, 1891, the journal *Nature* announced the recovery of a "giant man" clad in copper armor from an old burial mound.
- *Toledo, Ohio:* Investigators found 20 skeletons "twice as large as those of present day people" in a burial mound, in October 1895.
- *Paynesville, Minnesota:* In August 1896, diggers found the skeleton of a "huge man" on the Beckley farm.
- *Lovelock, Nevada:* In 1911, miners found several red-haired mummies measuring 6.5–8 ft. tall. A single skull has been preserved at the Humboldt County Museum in Winnemucca.
- *Bear Creek, Montana:* In 1920, miners found two human molars "three times larger than normal."
- *Grand Canyon, Arizona:* Samuel Hubbard claimed discovery of two human skeletons, 15 and 18 ft. tall, in September 1923.
- *Sisoguichi, Mexico:* Miners discovered several skeletons 10–12 ft. tall in June 1925.
- *Nayarit, Mexico:* Explorers F.W. Devalda and D.W. Page discovered bones from "a race of giants who averaged over 10 ft. in height."

- *Rio Tapextla, Mexico:* Newspapers from October 1927 report the discovery of bones from humans of "gigantic size."
- *Lovelock, Nevada:* February and June 1931 brought the discoveries of two skeletons measuring 8.5 and 10 ft., respectively.
- *Tanzania, Africa:* Paleontologist Larson Kohl found bones of "gigantic men" near Lake Eyasi in 1936.
- *Lovelock, Nevada:* Workmen found a 7 ft., 7 in. skeleton on the Friedman ranch in September 1939.
- *Shemya, Alaska:* During World War II, soldiers building airstrips on this island in the Semichi chain uncovered human crania measuring 22–24 in. from base to crown (three times normal size). All had been trepanned (drilled with surgical holes).
- *Death Valley, California:* Newspapers reported the discovery of 9-ft. skeletons in 1947.
- *Homs, Syria:* Reports claim "many tombs of giants" were found in the 1950s. Two femurs measured 47 in.
- *Breathitt County, Kentucky:* In 1965, rancher Kenneth White found a skeleton 8 ft., 9 in. tall near Holly Creek.
- *Buffalo Mills, Pennsylvania:* Residents claimed sightings of a 9-ft. man dressed in strange "shimmering" clothes on August 19, 1973.

Surprisingly, with one exception, none of the remains described here were preserved. Only casts of the Syrian femurs exist today; they are displayed at a small religious museum in Texas. Most anthropologists reject the anecdotal evidence of human giants that has been collected thus far.

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MAHAMBA

Mahamba is the name applied in the Democratic Republic of Congo to a supposed 50-ft. crocodile presently unrecognized by science. Africa's largest known crocodile is the Nile species, known to reach 20 ft. in some cases. A Burundi man-eater nicknamed "Gustave"—subject of the 2007 horror film *Primeval*—allegedly exceeds that length but has not been captured. A larger species, the estuarine (or saltwater) crocodile may reach 25 ft. according to *The Guinness Book of World Records* and is ranked by some herpetologists as earth's largest reptile.

Mahamba, if it exists, doubles that impressive size. Belgian explorer James Werner reported crocodiles 40–50 ft. long in the Congo between 1989–90, and Congolese tribesmen interviewed by Dr. Roy Mackal in 1981 insisted that mahamba was a separate species from the Nile crocodile they call *nkoli*. Dr. Mackal speculates that mahamba may represent a relict population of *deinosuchus*, a huge crocodile from the Cretaceous period whose fossil remains in Texas and India measured 52 ft. and 58.5 ft. respectively. The Texas specimen possessed a skull 6.5 ft. long.

An alternative theory suggests that mahamba may be a freshwater species of the prehistoric marine reptile *mosasaur,* whose largest representative (*Tylosaurus*) exceeded 48 ft.

Those predators had fins instead of legs and likely could not dig the underwater tunnels enjoyed by crocodiles—reportedly including mahamba. Without a specimen for study, paleontologists generally dismiss the notion of prehistoric survivors roaming modern Africa, suggesting that mahamba witnesses simply exaggerate the size of common crocodiles.

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PYGMY ELEPHANT

Elephants are the largest known land-dwelling creatures on earth. Science recognizes three species in Africa and one in Asia, with three subspecies. The African bush elephant outranks all others in size, with a record specimen shot in 1956 standing 13.8 ft. tall and weighing 26,400 lbs. Africa's forest elephants—identified as a separate species through DNA testing in 2001—rarely exceed 8 ft. in height and are further distinguished from bush elephants by the shape of their ears and the number of toenails found on their feet. Africa's third species, the savannah elephant, was identified by DNA testing in 2003. Asian elephants range over 11 countries, from India to Indonesia. Subspecies include the Indian, Sumatran, and Borneo elephants—the latter identified by DNA in 2003. Borneo's subspecies is sometimes called the Borneo pygmy elephant, although adult males may stand 8 ft. tall at the shoulder.

When cryptozoologists refer to pygmy elephants, they are talking about an African species first described by Prof. Theodore Noack in 1906. Noack studied a small adult elephant at New York's Bronx Zoo and gave it the scientific name *Loxodonta pumilio*. A second specimen was caught in 1911, two more in 1932, and a fifth in 1948. All were less than 6.5 ft. tall, but critics of Noack's theory claimed—and still insist today—that the five specimens were simply forest elephants afflicted with dwarfism.

In May 1982, while hunting in the Likouala region of the Congo, German diplomat Harold Nestroy snapped several clear color photographs of an apparent pygmy elephant herd. Cryptozoologists hailed those photos as proof that pygmy elephants exist as a distinct species or subspecies, rather than as isolated freaks. Supporting that view, they note that Congo villagers distinguish between "blue" elephants (the known forest species) and smaller "red" elephants that favor dense swampland.

Kani tribesmen in India's mountainous Western Ghats also describe a species of pygmy elephant they call *kallana,* which seldom exceed 5 ft. tall. Wildlife photographer Sali Palode reportedly snapped pictures of a pygmy elephant herd in 2005, but doubters claim that the beasts in his photos are infant Asian elephants. Without a specimen to study, zoologists dismiss the Kallana as a myth.

True pygmy elephants are not unprecedented. A prehistoric species, *moeritherium,* inhabited Africa 30–50 million years ago and rarely grew more than 2 ft. tall. Insular dwarfism—an evolutionary process that reduces the size of some animals confined to small habitats—also produced small elephants whose bones have been found on the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus, Malta, Crete, Sicily, Sardinia, the Cyclades, and the Dodecanese. Similar remains have been found on the Asian islands of Flores, Sulawesi, Timor, and the Lesser Sundas. Even California's Channel Islands once supported a species of dwarf mammoth. Russia's Wrangel Island, in the Arctic Ocean, harbored pygmy mammoths until about 2000 B.C.E., while Sicily's pygmy elephants may have survived into the first cen-

tury C.E. Some reports claim that Thailand's pygmy species lived into the 19th century, raising hopes that others may still survive.

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PYGMY HIPPOPOTAMUS

While the hippopotamus was recognized by European explorers in ancient times, reports of a second and much smaller species did not emerge from Africa until 1840. The Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences received two pygmy hippo skulls from Liberia—where natives called the beast a "water cow"—in 1843, and Dr. Samuel Morton named the species *Hippopotamus liberiensis* in 1849, but most zoologists still denied its existence. Ireland's Dublin Zoo procured the first live pygmy hippo in 1870, and further examination convinced Joseph Leidy, a colleague of Dr. Morton, that the pygmy species properly belonged to a new genus, which he named *Choeropsis*.

In spite of these instances, controversy persisted, with some scientists insisting that the pygmy hippos were merely freaks of nature. Reports from Africa confused the issue, as Liberian tribesmen described two kinds of native pigs—a red species called *couja*, and a larger, black species called *couja quinta*. According to reports from foreign travelers, the

A female pygmy hippopotamus with its offspring, born at an Indonesian Safari Park in July 2005. (AP Photo/Dita Alangkara)

couja quinta was a dangerous beast with "teeth so sharp that they break everything they bite as if they were so many axes." Other stories claimed the black pigs carried shining diamonds in their mouths to guide them through the jungle at night.

German animal collector Hans Schomburgk spent two years in Liberia tracking the couja quinta, and finally sighted a specimen in June 1911, confirming that it was a pygmy hippo. That creature escaped, but Schomburgk shot one on February 28, 1913 and captured another alive the following day. On his return to Germany in July 1913, Schomburgk brought five living specimens to the Hamburg Zoo. The largest adult stood 30 in. high and was 5 ft., 10 in. long (compared to the common hippo at 5 ft. tall and 11 ft. long).

Today, pygmy hippos are considered an endangered species. Most of the 2,000–3,000 surviving specimens live in Liberian forests, but smaller populations also exist in Côte d'Ivoire's Taï National Park, in Guinea's Reserve de Ziama, and scattered locations across Sierra Leone. A Nigerian subspecies, presumed extinct today, was identified from four skulls collected by British colonial officer I.R.P. Heslop in the 1940s.

An ongoing mystery surrounds a small hippo-like creature called *kilopilopitsofy* or *tsy-aomby-aomby*, reported from the large African island of Madagascar. French colonial officers mentioned the creature in various reports from 1648 to 1902. American researcher David Burney collected native tales of the kilopilopitsofy in the 1990s, reporting that its last confirmed appearance dated from 1976. Burney suggested that witnesses may have glimpsed a relict Malagasy dwarf hippopotamus, described from fossil remains in the 19th century and presumed to be extinct. Today, science recognizes three extinct species of hippo from Madagascar, with some researchers supporting the former existence of a fourth species. One of the known species, *Choeropsis madagascariensis*, was related to the pygmy hippopotamus of mainland Africa. Whether some small and isolated population still survives remains a subject of debate among cryptozoologists.

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PYGMY RHINOCEROS

In 1913, when Hans Schomburgk returned from Africa with five pygmy hippopotamuses, he also carried tales of a pygmy rhinoceros unknown to science and said to inhabit the forests of eastern Liberia. Similar reports emerged from Cameroon in January 1931, although no rhinoceros—fossil or living—has been confirmed from either nation. Lucien Blancou served as chief game inspector for French Equatorial Africa (including present-day Chad, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo) from 1949–53 and later reported that:

> The Africans in the north of the Kellé district, especially the pygmies, know a forest animal larger than a buffalo, almost as large as an elephant, but which is not a hippopotamus. . . . The sketch of its footprint which they drew . . . is that of a rhinoceros.

That creature hardly sounded like a pygmy species, but Bernard Heuvelmans concluded that any forest-dwelling rhino must be smaller than the known species inhabiting

African grasslands. An adult white rhinoceros stands 6 ft. tall at the shoulder and measures 11–14 ft. long, while the average black rhino averages 5 ft. high and 11–12 ft. long. Indian rhinos average 6 ft. tall and may reach 13 ft. long. The rare Javan rhino boasts a record height of 5 ft., 6 in. and a top length of 10 ft., 6 in., while the largest Sumatran rhino measured 4 ft., 3 in. tall and 10 ft., 4 in. long.

Dr. Roy Mackal, a former professor of biology at the University of Chicago, suggests that African pygmy rhinos may not be mammals at all, but rather surviving dinosaurs. Working from photos of strange footprints snapped by French wildlife photographer Atelier Ridel in the early 1980s, Mackal concluded that the alleged forest rhinoceros might be the same creature known to tribesmen of the Congo's Likouala region as *emela-ntouka* ("killer of elephants"). Witnesses describe the *emela-ntouka* as a semi-aquatic herbivore with a ferocious temper and a long horn on its snout, with which it sometimes kills both elephants and buffaloes. Mackal speculates that the beast may be a relict ceratopsian dinosaur, whose number included the well-known *Triceratops* and the single-horned centrosaurus, but no current proof exists of dinosaurs surviving on earth.

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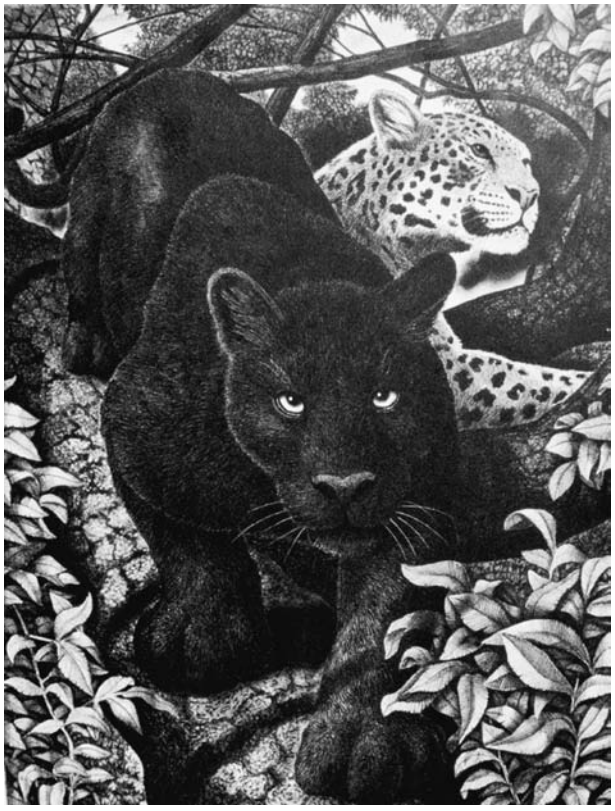
OUT OF PLACE

Some cryptozoologists devote their time exclusively to investigating reports of known animals seen in unexpected places, far from their normal habitats. These out-of-place creatures—sometimes referred to as "OOPs"—comprise a significant portion of cryptids reported during any given year, and their variety is startling. In Great Britain alone, witnesses report more than 1,000 sightings of "alien" big cats per year, while an Internet Web site (Beastwatch UK, http://www.beastwatch.co.uk) logs reports of other exotic creatures, ranging from tropical spiders and birds to large mammals and reptiles. Similar reports emerge from the United States, Europe, Australia—every corner of the world, in fact. Authorities explain some cases by insisting that exotic pets have been released or lost by private owners, and, while this may be true in some cases, few of the hypothetical owners are ever identified.

ALIEN BIG CATS

Scientifically speaking, big cats are members of the genus *Panthera* (lions, tigers, leopards, and jaguars). They have bony structures in their throats allowing them to roar, but not to purr consistently. Other large cats—including cougars, cheetahs, clouded leopards and snow leopards—do not belong in the same category, although they are often described as big cats, based on their size. In cryptozoology, however, the label of alien big cats, commonly shortened to "ABCs," applies to any large feline species reported far afield from its natural range.

While ABCs are a worldwide phenomenon, the vast majority of sightings emerge from Europe, Australia, and North America. Great Britain leads the list for Europe, with the first known sighting of a huge "wood cat" reported in 1475, at a South Yorkshire site known today as Cat Hill. Witnesses in Surrey logged their first alleged cougar sighting in 1825, and the same district is famous for its "Surrey Puma," seen repeatedly from the 1930s to the present. The British Big Cat Society, formed in March 2001, recorded more



Alien big cats are often seen in the United States, Europe, and Australia. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

than 1,000 ABC sightings in its first 18 months, while the Scottish Big Cat Society reported a similar number of sightings in Scotland.

Most British ABC reports followed passage of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act in 1976, which restricted ownership of exotic creatures and imposed strict licensing requirements. Several big cat owners later admitted releasing their pets to the wild, and researchers suspect that many others did likewise. According to Britain's Ministry of Agriculture, only 16 big cats escaped from their owners between 1977 and 1998, with all but two recaptured, yet the huge number of sightings suggests otherwise. Paul Sieveking, editor of *Fortean Times* magazine, lists numerous "bodies of evidence" proving that large felines roam throughout Britain. The list of exotic cats killed or caught alive in the United Kingdom since 1975 presently includes five leopard cats (small wild cats of Southeast Asia), three jungle cats, two leopards, two cougars, two lynxes, one clouded leopard, one lioness, and one African caracal.

All cats are alien to Australia, which had none prior to the arrival of European explorers in 1606. A cougar-sized marsupial lion filled the gap in nature, but apparently became extinct about 10,000 years ago. Nevertheless, Australia logged more than 1,000 ABC sightings between 1885 and 1994, when authors Paul Cropper and Tony Healey published the first survey of Australian cryptids. Two-thirds of those reports involved black

panthers—a term used interchangeably for melanistic jaguars and leopards—while the rest describe cats resembling cougars. Some researchers suggest that cougars reached Australia during World War II, as mascots of American military units stationed Down Under, but that would not account for any sightings prior to 1942. In November 2003, government officials declared it "more likely than not" that a breeding colony of ABCs exists in the Australian state of New South Wales.

In North America, ABC sightings date from 1767, when settlers reported a "tyger" at large in the region of present-day Pepin County, Wisconsin. Thirty years later, farmers in Clinton County, Pennsylvania, reported a small pride of lions including a male, female, and three cubs. Hunters tracked an apparent male lion around Russellville, Kentucky in July 1823, but never bagged it. Other 19th-century lion sightings emerged from Maine (1836) and California (where Archie McMath killed an 11-ft. male in 1868). Residents of North Carolina reported a tiger at large, roaming over a four-county range between 1890 and 1897.

Strange reports from Illinois and Indiana, during 1948, described an apparent male lion traveling with a black panther. Lions and leopards do not socialize in nature, but similar reports of mismatched cats also emerged from Canada (1952), California (1972), and Arkansas (1977). Ohio residents saw a panther and a striped cat prowling together, in 1994. Author Loren Coleman has proposed a startling theory to explain those incidents, as well as the 1,405 black panther sightings reported across the United States between 1965 and 2004. Coleman suggests that prehistoric cave lions, presumed extinct for 10,000 years, may have survived in certain parts of the United States—and that females of the species may display dark coats, causing confusion with black panthers. No scientists endorse that theory, but ABC sightings continue worldwide.

Further Reading: Harpur, M. *Mystery Big Cats*. (Loughborough, England: Heart of Albion, 2006); Matthews, Marcus. *Big Cats Loose in Britain*. (Bideford, England: CFZ Press, 2007); Shuker, K. *Mystery Cats of the World*. (London: Robert Hale, 1989).

BRITISH WOLVERINES

Wolverines are the largest land-dwelling members of the weasel family, with two subspecies recognized from the Old and New Worlds, respectively. Their New World range extends from Alaska across northern Canada, with some specimens dwelling further south into the Cascade and Rocky Mountains. In the Old World, wolverines can be found in Scandinavia and Siberia. None of these fierce predators are thought to live in Britain, yet sightings persist.

Britain's current wolverine mystery dates from 1992, when witnesses reported six sightings around Letterston, Wales, between February and August. Local farmer Lawton Watts claimed two sightings on his property and blamed a wolverine for killing two lambs in September 1992. Watts lost four more lambs to the night-prowling hunter in May 1995.

Meanwhile, sightings spread to Exmoor, England, where naturalists Endymion and Trever Beer saw a pair of wolverines in January 1994. Witness John Corbett reported a wolverine stalking rabbits near St. Audries, Somerset, in February 1994, and a motorist ran over a wolverine near Wembworthy, Devon, that summer. Other sightings from 1994 were logged from Pembroke National Park, from Somerset's Quantock Hills, and from

South Moulton, near Dartmoor. Authorities offered the usual exotic pet explanation after a farmer shot and killed a wolverine near Llangollen, Wales, in November 1997.

Researchers note that a pair of binturongs—wolverine look-alikes, also known as Asian bearcats—was allegedly released on Exmoor in the 1970s, but proof of that incident remains as elusive as Britain's wolverines. In 2003, a motorist reported two sightings of an apparent wolverine prowling the moors between Ireshopburn and Rookhope, in County Durham, England. She told a local newspaper, the *Northern Echo*, "I have twice seen a beastie that looks like one, a big, ferret-like creature, almost as long as a badger. It is polecat-colored at a guess, but on both occasions it has been dark and only briefly seen in the car lights. Whatever it is, it lives in a small conifer plantation populated by loads of rabbits, hares and squirrels." Since neither of the specimens killed in 1994 or 1997 was preserved or photographed, the controversy continues.

Further Reading: Beastwatch UK, www.beastwatch.co.uk; Shuker, K. "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolverine?" *Fortean Times* 85 (1986): 36–37.

CROCODILIANS

Members of the order *Crocodilia* are large semi-aquatic reptiles, descendants of the prehistoric archosauria that appeared on earth some 220 million years ago. Virtually unchanged for the past 84 million years, crocodilians presently include two species of alligator (found in North America and China), at least five species of caimans (some sources say eight, all native to Central and South America), 14 species of crocodiles (found worldwide, from the Florida Keys through Africa, Asia, and Oceania), and one species of gharial (found in northern India and adjoining nations). While North America naturally harbors two crocodilian species—the American alligator and American crocodile—authorities also acknowledge breeding colonies of caimans in southern Florida's swamps.

Reports of misplaced crocodilians fall into two broad categories: alligator sightings in parts of North America where they should not be found, and reports of various species seen in places where none should be present, such as Britain and mainland Europe. Authorities explain all modern sightings as released exotic pets, regardless of the reptile's size or age and the persistence of reports over a span of years. Author Loren Coleman, in his book *Mysterious America*, suggests (without any apparent evidence) that certain reptiles teleport from their normal habitats to far-off locations.

American alligators normally inhabit the southeastern United States, from the Carolinas to eastern Texas and southern Oklahoma, with their greatest concentration found in the swamps of Florida and states along the Gulf of Mexico. Still, from 1892 to the present day, multiple specimens have surfaced in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. Further north, in Canada, alligators have been found in British Columbia, Ontario, and Québec. Most of these reports cannot be dismissed as cases of mistaken identity, as alligators have been killed or captured in all of the states named above, as well as in Ontario and Québec.

American alligators were once considered an endangered species, but their numbers have rebounded greatly since the 1970s and juvenile specimens are widely sold as pets. This fact, and frequent reports of small alligators at large, supports the official view that

many—or most—alligators found in northern states are exotic pets lost or released by their owners, Still, reports of reptiles 6–8 ft. long from several California lakes suggest the possibility of breeding populations. A 5-ft. alligator was captured in Tucson, Arizona in 1950, and while authorities describe reports of alligators living in New York City's sewer system as urban legends, a 7.5-ft. specimen weighing 125 lbs. was killed in a local sewer line on February 9, 1935.

Caimans, closely related to alligators and often mistaken for them, also surface in unlikely places. Arizona wildlife authorities report 10–12 specimens captured each year, while others have been caught in California (1996) and in New York City's Central Park (June 2001). They have also turned up in England, with captures reported in 1996 and 2003. Since 1836, British witnesses have claimed encounters with more than 100 out-of-place crocodilians, ranging from Oxford, Kent, and Staffordshire to Wales. Reports from Russia begin even earlier, with reports of several crocodilians killed around Pskov, 400 miles northwest of Moscow, after "many people were bitten" in 1582. A 5-ft. crocodile emerged from the Rhine in June 2001 to frighten residents of Ketch, Germany, while residents of Dalsland, Sweden found a 2-ft. crocodile dead outside town that same month. Two crocodiles eluded Spanish police at Valmayor Dam, near Madrid, in June 2003. Five months later, a 5-ft. specimen proved equally elusive in Hong Kong.

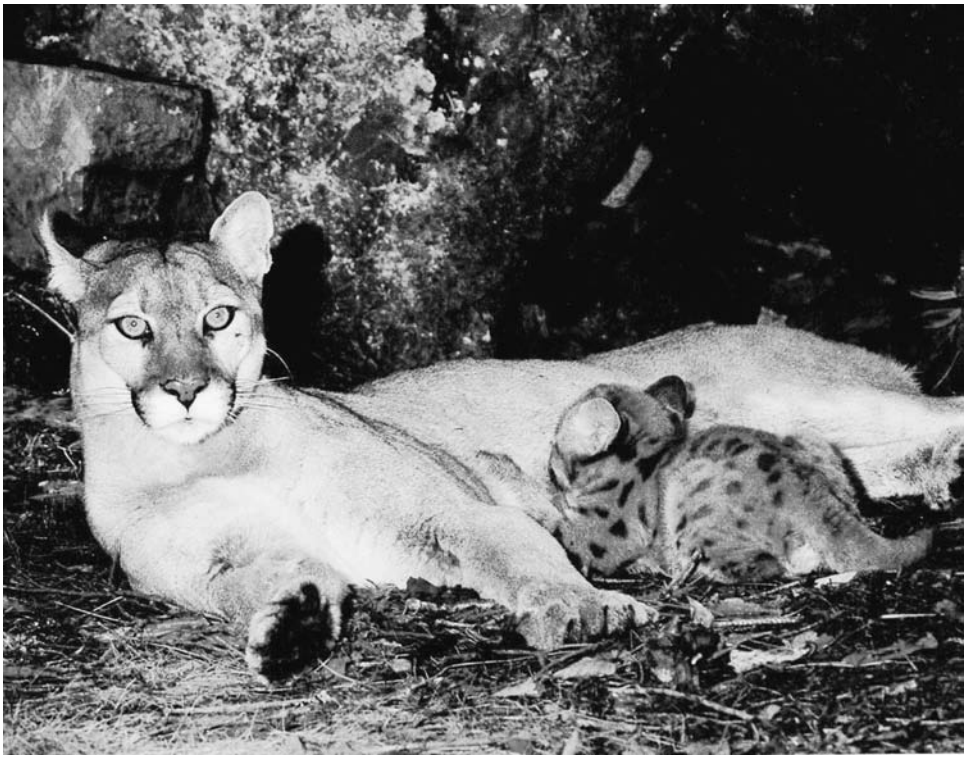
Further Reading: Crocodilians, http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/ cnhc/cnhc.html; Newton, M. *Encyclopedia of Cryptozoology,* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), pp. 17–19, 81, 120–21.

EASTERN COUGARS

Cougars—also known as pumas or mountain lions—rank as North America's largest living felid species. The larger jaguar, once found from southern California through Texas, was extirpated by 1905 (although a single specimen, identified by its distinctive spots, has been photographed repeatedly in Arizona since 2003). Hunters and settlers in the eastern United States slaughtered cougars until the cats were declared officially extinct in states east of the Mississippi River by the early 1920s. Canadian authorities claim that the last cougar in their nation's eastern provinces was killed in 1938. Today, at least officially, no eastern cougars can be found outside of Florida, where an endangered population survives in the Everglades.

Unofficially, however, cougar sightings have persisted to the present day from every eastern state and Canadian province, defying official pronouncements of extinction. John Lutz, founder and director of the Eastern Puma Research Network, lists 6,139 cougar sightings from 27 eastern states (excluding Florida) in the years 1965 and 2004. In 430 cases, adult cats were seen with cubs, indicating that the animals observed were not lost pets or isolated strays from other states where cougars are known to exist. Strangely, 1,405 of those reports involve black cats, which Lutz describes as melanistic cougars. Most zoologists insist that no black cougars have been documented, either from the wild or in captivity. In 2003 author Jerry Coleman examined a supposed black cougar, displayed at a shop in Church Hill, Tennessee. He learned that the cat was shot in Montana—and that the shop's owner had dyed its fur black.

Despite that hoax, there is no doubt that cougars still appear in various eastern states. Official claims that witnesses mistake large dogs or other animals for extinct cats fall flat in the face of hard evidence. Prowling cougars have been photographed or videotaped in



Although officially extinct, cougars are seen every year throughout the eastern United States and Canada. (Source: U.S. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife)

New Brunswick, Canada (1990), Maryland (1992), Maine (1993), Minnesota (1996 and 2002), Michigan (2001, a female with two cubs), Iowa (2003, an adult and cub), and Arkansas (2003). More persuasive still are the specimens killed in states where they should not be found, including:

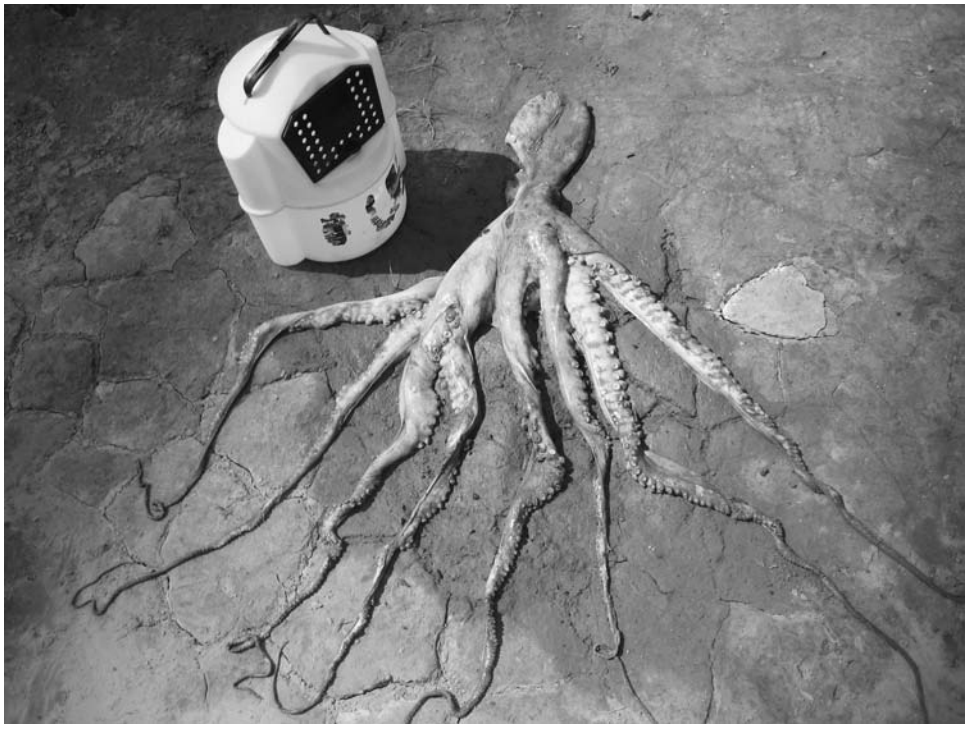
- West Virginia, 1976—a male shot after mauling sheep
- Oklahoma, 1982—shot by a hunter
- Kentucky, 1997—an 8-lb. cub struck by a car, linked to wild South American ancestors by DNA testing
- Nebraska, 2000—shot by police near a public school
- Iowa, 2001—a 7.5-ft. male struck by a car
- Minnesota, 2001—a female and two cubs shot after attacking sheep
- Illinois, 2002—a 110-lb, male struck by a train, found with claws intact and venison in its stomach
- Missouri, 2002—struck by a car
- Missouri, 2003—a 105-lb. male struck by a car, revealing "no signs of having been in captivity"
- Iowa, 2003—shot by a farmer

This accumulated evidence has forced some state officials to admit that cougars may still be found in certain states east of the Rocky Mountains. Nebraska authorities reported 11 confirmed cougar sightings between 1991 and 2001, while ignoring many others. In December 2001, North Carolina's wildlife officers announced that cougars were returning to their state. That same year, Michigan acknowledged 10–20 cougars living wild on the state's Upper Peninsula, with "a few" further south—but insisted that all were pets released by their owners. To that, former Michigan forestry officer Mike Zuidema replied, "It's a real dumb thing to say that they're pets. Where did they come from? Does everybody with cougar pets come to the Upper Peninsula to release them? Almost every cougar pet is declawed, so how would they be killing deer?"

Further Reading: Butz, B. *Beast of Never, Cat of God.* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2005); Parker, G. *The Eastern Panther.* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1988); Wright, B. *The Ghost of North America.* (New York: Vantage, 1959).

FRESHWATER OCTOPUS

An octopus is an eight-legged cephalopod related to the squid and cuttlefish. Science recognizes 289 species of octopus living in seas and oceans worldwide. All known species dwell in salt water, yet specimens continue to appear in freshwater lakes and rivers throughout the United States and elsewhere. Reported cases include:



A fisherman pulled this octopus from the Ohio River in 2006. (Credit: Paul McLean)

- January 11, 1946: Six live octopuses, the largest weighing 20 lbs., were pulled from the north branch of the Blackwater River near Morgantown, West Virginia. All died en route to a local high school, where they were examined by a science teacher and photographed by journalists.
- 1955: Two boys caught an octopus with 2-ft. tentacles in a creek outside Grafton, West Virginia and gave it to the town's dogcatcher. It died soon afterward.
- January 30, 1959: Residents of Covington, Kentucky, found an octopus crawling on the bank of the Licking River.
- April 8, 1966: An octopus with a 35-in. leg span allegedly attacked children playing in a creek at Rivera, Uruguay. Police speculated that the octopus reached the creek "by flooding from rains."
- July 11, 1970: Slaughterhouse workers found mangled bits of an octopus in their pumping station at landlocked Quemú-Quemú, Argentina. The incident remains unexplained.
- October 15, 1990: Two men at San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina—300 miles from the nearest ocean—reportedly found a live octopus "under the ground."
- November 19, 1999: Tourists found a small dead octopus at Indiana's Falls of the Ohio State Park, near the bank of the Ohio River.
- December 1, 2003: A fisherman caught a live octopus at a dam on Lake Conway, Arkansas. Officials speculated that it was a pet dumped by its owner.
- August 7, 2006: David Stepp netted a dead octopus with a 6-ft. leg span while fishing at Falls of the Ohio State Park.

In addition to these specific incidents, some Oklahoma residents blame large freshwater octopuses for various drownings and disappearances of swimmers at Lakes Oologah, Tenkiller, and Thunderbird. No captures have been recorded from those sites, and authorities dismiss the notion of freshwater cephalopods inhabiting the lakes.

Further Reading: CephBase, http://www.cephbase.utmb.edu; Newton, M. *Encyclopedia of Cryptozoology,* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), pp. 346–47.

FRESHWATER SHARKS

Sharks are fish distinguished by their streamlined bodies, lack of scales, and skeletons composed of cartilage. Science recognizes 361 species of sharks, ranging in size from the 9-in. pygmy shark to the huge whale shark, which sometimes exceeds 40 ft. Most sharks are marine fish, living only in salt water, although bull sharks seem equally at home in rivers, sometimes swimming miles inland through fresh water. A subspecies of bull shark inhabits Lake Nicaragua, in Central America, obtaining access to that freshwater lake from the Caribbean Sea via the San Juan River.

River sharks, belonging to the genus *Glyphis*, also appear in fresh water at times, but their numbers are few and some ichthyologists dispute their present existence. India's Ganges River's sharks are critically endangered, while Australia's Bizant River shark is known only from two specimens collected in Queensland. Borneo's river shark, likewise, is known only from two fish collected a century apart, in the late 1890s and 1987. New

Guinea also claims a river shark, identified from five jaws and two juvenile specimens—all of which are now lost.

Do sharks that live exclusively in freshwater exist? Most scientists are skeptical, but evidence continues to accumulate that some species thrive—or at least survive—in fresh water. Reports include the following:

- Early 1900s: British explorer Percy Fawcett described huge toothless sharks inhabiting Brazil's Rio Paraguay. Some modern researchers believe Fawcett actually saw a new species of giant catfish.
- 1940s: While serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, future anthropologist George Agogino saw an unknown shark in western New Guinea's Lake Sentani. Skeptics note that the lake supports a population of sawfish, some reaching 19 ft. in length.
- July 1968: Canadian fisherman pulled a 4-ft. shark of unknown species and weighing 20 lbs. from a river outside Montreal. It presumably reached that point by swimming from the North Atlantic through the St. Lawrence River.
- July 1976: Two youths hooked a 3.5-ft. sand shark at a lake in the Dallas suburb of Arlington, Texas, 200 miles from the nearest salt water.
- August 1977: An unidentified shark, measuring 25 in. and weighing 10 lbs., was caught in West Virginia's East Lynn Lake, in landlocked Wayne County.
- June 1978: Workers at a Detroit factory found a dead shark in the plant's water-intake pipe, presumably drawn from Lake Erie.
- June 2000: Residents of Glasgow, Scotland, alerted police to a live shark flapping on the pavement at the downtown intersection of Argyle and Carunna Streets. The fish was dead when officers arrived, and its origin remains undetermined.
- September 2002: A 4-ft. tope shark was found dead on an island in the River Dearne, at Barnsley, South Yorkshire, England. To reach that spot, the fish must have traveled more than 60 miles upstream from the North Sea. Investigators have no idea how or why it was stranded.

Further Reading: Compagno, L., M. Dando, and S. Fowler. *Sharks of the World.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

GHOST GRIZZLIES

Brown bears—which include the subspecies known as grizzlies or silvertips for the color of fur displayed by adults—once roamed over most of North America. Unrestricted hunting and destruction of the natural environment by advancing civilization drove the species north and westward over time, until surviving populations were acknowledged only in Alaska, western Canada, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas.

Colorado, in particular, seemed proud of wiping out its grizzly bears. State officials, ranchers, and professional hunters waged war against grizzlies from the 1870s until 1953, when hunting the species was legally banned. The final toll of the slaughter is unknown, but Colorado's Predator and Rodent Control division counted 304 bears killed between 1946 and 1947 alone, with ears severed as trophies to verify the kills. By 1952, a year before

grizzly hunting was outlawed, spokesmen for Colorado's Division of Wildlife Services proclaimed brown bears extinct within the Rocky Mountain State.

They were wrong.

Grizzly sightings from the southern San Juan Mountains persisted without verification until September 1979, when bow hunter Ed Wiseman killed a grizzly near Pagosa Springs. Wiseman claimed that he surprised the bear while it was sleeping, whereupon it attacked him and he was forced to defend himself, stabbing it to death with a hand-held arrow. Author David Peterson cites evidence calling Wiseman's story into question, but one thing was clear: Colorado's last grizzly had not died in 1952.

The questions began. Had Wiseman's bear wandered into Colorado from another state, or did others still live in the San Juan Mountains? After various delays, Colorado wildlife authorities conducted an extensive wild-trapping program during the summers of 1981 and 1982, hoping to capture any remaining grizzlies and fit them with radio-tracking devices before their release, but none took the bait. State spokesmen then reverted to their former view that Colorado grizzlies were extinct and made no further effort to locate survivors in the wild.

Despite efforts by state officials, sightings continued, including a July 1990 case in which hair was collected, tested, and confirmed to be that of a grizzly. That summer, filmmaker Douglas Peacock launched his own investigation in the San Juans, pursuing leads and evidence over the next six years. Peacock found no bears himself, but an associate, author David Peterson, found more hairs and droppings at Grizzly Lake, near Tierra Amarilla, in August 1994. DNA tests revealed a 75 percent probability that the samples had come from a grizzly. In September 1986, two experienced hunters reported seeing three grizzlies together at Independence Pass, in central Colorado's Sawatch Mountains, but authorities remained skeptical.

Today, while listing grizzlies as an endangered species, Colorado's Division of Wildlife insists that the bears are "probably gone from the state." Some conservationists propose the reintroduction of grizzlies into Colorado wilderness areas, but the Colorado Wildlife Commission—influenced by ranchers and farmers—opposes the plan. Meanwhile, sporadic sightings of the supposedly extinct bears continue.

Further Reading: Bass, R. *The Lost Grizzlies*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995); Peterson, D. *Ghost Grizzlies*. (New York: Henry Holt, 1995).

NEW ZEALAND MOOSE

The largest member of the deer family, standing 6–7 ft. tall at the shoulder and weighing up to 1,180 lbs., is known as moose in North America and elk in Europe, where its range extends from Scandinavia across Siberia. By any name, it is a creature of the Northern Hemisphere, at home in the woodlands of the subarctic zones. The sole exception to this rule is not the result of natural inhabitation, but rather a scheme by humans to improve their environment.

In 1909, a private acclimatization society imported 10 moose from Canada to Fiordland, on New Zealand's South Island, where they were released into the wild. Set adrift in an alien environment, most of the moose soon died and locals believed that all were extinct by the 1950s. Still, rumors of sightings persisted, prompting biologist Ken Tustin to initiate a 21st-century investigation of eyewitness claims. In 2001, hunters found an unfamiliar

clump of hair in Fiordland National Park and delivered it to Tustin, who passed it on for DNA testing at a government laboratory. The sample was identified as moose hair from a living specimen, disproving claims that it was plucked from a taxidermist's mount.

"I was absolutely delighted," Tustin told Canada's *National Post* in July 2001. "I've been ridiculed and accused of falling for a hoax, but I assure you it's no hoax."

While Tustin himself has yet to glimpse a moose in the wild, camera traps outside Fiordland have produced one grainy snapshot of a large animal standing beside two normal-sized deer. Although convinced it is a moose, Tustin admits the photo is too vague to prove his case. Today, even outspoken skeptic Martin Boyce admits that the Fiordland wilderness is "very wild with almost no roads and dense rain forest vegetation. It'd be very easy to hide a herd of moose in there." That said, Boyce insists that there are "likely no more than a couple of dozen moose in the entire country."

New Zealand researchers have urged the nation's Department of Conservation to ban moose hunting, but no official action has yet been taken. Critics note that no moose have been bagged by hunters in the past half century, and even Ken Tustin admits, "The moose seem to be very capable of taking care of themselves."

Further Reading: Wattie, C. "New Zealander Tracks down his Country's Version of Bigfoot." *National Post* (Toronto), July 13, 2001.

NORTH AMERICAN APES

While breeding colonies of certain monkey species now exist in parts of the United States, resulting from escape or release of exotic pets, science considers human beings to be the only living primates naturally occurring in North America. Even humans, however, were immigrants from Asia, apparently crossing the Bering Strait on a bridge of ice some 12,000 years ago. Nevertheless, zoologists are adamant in their denials that any apes or monkeys followed the same route. This official verdict, however, has not stopped sightings of apparent apes throughout the country, spanning 154 years.

Native American mythology includes many references to forest-dwelling apemen, and sightings by Anglo-European settlers occurred in at least five states between 1818 and 1856. Today, most cryptozoologists regard those incidents as encounters with Bigfoot or Sasquatch (see section 4), but others note a variation in descriptions of the creatures, separating those with humanoid characteristics from other, more primitive specimens.

A "small monkey-like creature" cavorted around Wadolboro, Maine in January 1855. The first American description of a gorilla at large came 14 years later, from Gallipolis, Ohio. Another shaggy primate, nicknamed "Old Sheff," terrorized Kansas farmers in August 1869. Hunters from Vernon, Indiana pursued an elusive gorilla in May 1891. Residents of Willoughby, Maryland killed a supposed gorilla in February 1921, but they did not preserve it for study. The "Norwalk Ape" harassed residents of Norwalk, Ohio during June 1930, before it moved on to Sandusky in July. A 4-ft. gorilla ran amok at a Long Island nursery in June 1931, leaving apelike tracks with an opposed big toe. Three years later, a large monkey returned to Long Island, vandalizing a home and car in Amityville. A mysterious chimpanzee prowled around Fort Dodge, Iowa between 1935 and 1936. Rev. Marsh Harpole grappled with a baboon that attacked him while Harpole was hunting near Mount Vernon, Illinois in the summer of 1941. A 6-ft. gorilla frightened citizens of Sandwich, New Hampshire in 1942.

Witnesses report sightings of unknown apes across the United States. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

Author Loren Coleman refers to such creatures as North American Apes (or NAPEs) and distinguishes them from Sasquatch by their apelike footprints. Coleman credits a NAPE with sparking his interest in cryptozoology at age 15, in 1962, when he and his younger brother Jerry found a 10-in. footprint with a fully-opposed big toe in a creek bed near their Decatur, Illinois home. Curiously, Jerry Coleman—himself the author of two books on unknown creatures—disputes that story, claiming that a friend hoaxed the footprint, then found it and showed it to Jerry, who ran home to alert Loren. Jerry Coleman says the hoaxer confessed in 1999, but Loren published two books, in 2001 and 2003, describing the track as genuine.

Whatever the facts of that case, a single hoax from 1962 cannot explain sightings across the continent, collected between the 19th and the 21st century. Bikers found fresh 11-in. tracks with opposed big toes outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in September 1973, and witnesses from Bloomington, Indiana saw a hairy, apelike creature prowling near Lake Monroe in January 2002. The beast left 5-in. tracks that remain unidentified today.

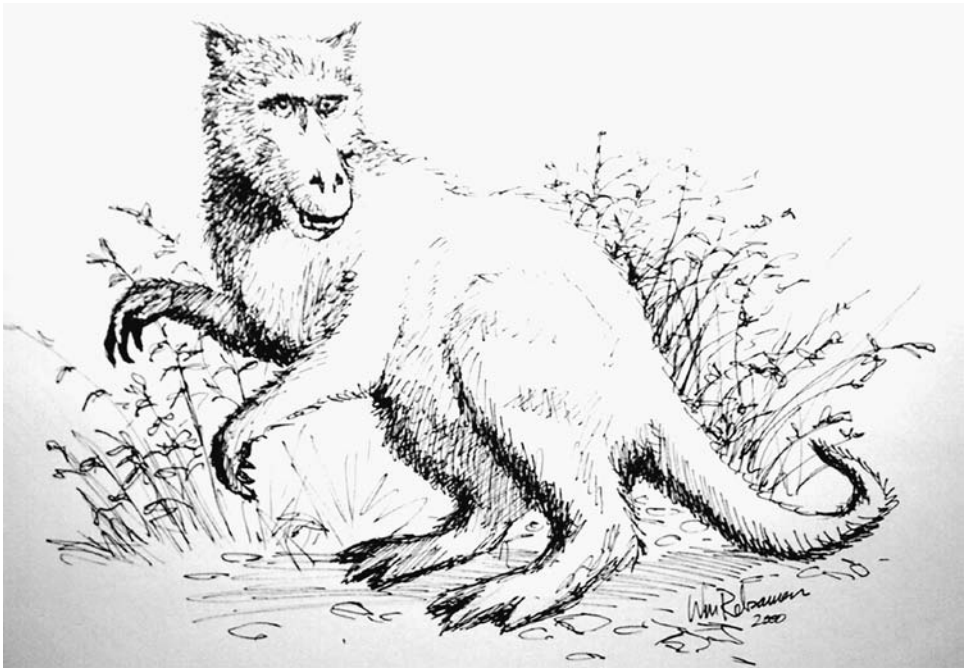
Further Reading: Arment, C. *The Historical Bigfoot.* (Landisville, PA: Coachwhip, 2006); Coleman, J. *Strange Highways,* (Alton, IL: Whitechapel, 2003), pp. 15–17; Coleman, L. *Mysterious America,* (New York: Paraview Press, 2001), pp. 206–20.

PHANTOM KANGAROOS

Kangaroos and their smaller, closely-related cousins, wallabies, are distinctive marsupials native to Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea. Specimens may also be found in many zoos around the world, and several wallabies reportedly escaped from a private menagerie near Cromer, England in the 1850s. Another 60-odd wallabies were imported to Britain's Peak District in the 1930s, where they established a small breeding colony. Their numbers dwindled through ensuing decades, and no reliable sightings have emerged from the district since 1995. A third isolated group of wallabies, established by a private owner on an island in Loch Lomond, Scotland in the 1970s, contained an estimated 40 specimens by 2005. Debate continues as to whether any of Loch Lomond's wallabies have found their way to the Scottish mainland.

While one may thus expect a roaming wallaby or two in Britain—where, indeed, sightings have been recorded from the 1940s through 2004—no specimens should be at large in mainland Europe or in North America. However, sightings have persisted from those continents for over 100 years. Those cases include:

- June 1899: A kangaroo eluded searchers in New Richmond, Wisconsin.
- January 1934: A killer kangaroo mauled pets and poultry around South Pittsburg, Tennessee. Although kangaroos are not meat-eaters, the creature allegedly killed and ate two police dogs.
- 1957–67: Residents of Coon Rapids, Minnesota reported numerous sightings, spanning a decade.



Author Loren Coleman blames "devil monkeys" for some American kangaroo sightings. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

- July 1958: One or more kangaroos surprised residents of Grand Isle, Nebraska and four nearby communities.
- July-August 1965: Motorists sighted kangaroos outside Abilene and Wakefield, Kansas.
- October 1974: A kangaroo battered two Chicago policemen who tried to capture it, then moved on to dodge patrols in Lansing, Millbrook, and Plano, Illinois, as well as Carmel and Rensselaer, Indiana over the next four weeks.
- August 1976: Police chased a kangaroo through Golden, Colorado but failed to capture it.
- April-May 1978: Multiple witnesses reported kangaroo sightings from Waukesha, Menomonee Falls, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. A resident of Menomonee Falls photographed the creature on April 24.
- August 1981: A Tulsa, Oklahoma motorist struck and killed one kangaroo, while another escaped into traffic and vanished.
- October 1981: Police pursued a kangaroo in Biltmore, North Carolina, but it escaped.
- July 1998: Officers failed to corral a kangaroo at large in Raleigh, North Carolina.
- August 2003: Austrian police captured a kangaroo at Wiener Neustadt, but failed to identify its presumed owner.
- September-October 2003: Phantom kangaroos eluded police officers in Limburg and Bosberg, Belgium.

Loren Coleman proposed a startling explanation for the phantom kangaroo phenomenon in 2001, suggesting that the creatures seen by many American witnesses were not marsupials at all, but rather unknown primates that he nicknamed "devil monkeys." A devil-monkey sketch prepared to Coleman's specifications by artist Bill Rebsamen depicts an animal resembling a baboon, but with a long tail like that of a kangaroo. Thus far, no mainstream zoologists have endorsed Coleman's theory.

Further Reading: Coleman, L. *Mysterious America,* (New York: Paraview Press, 2001), pp. 160–87; Newton, M. *Encyclopedia of Cryptozoology,* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), pp. 223–24, 480–81.

PIRANHAS AND PACU

Piranhas are fish belonging to the family *Serrasalmidae,* native to rivers in South America's Amazon Basin. Many authors dispute the number of piranha species, and published estimates range from 38 to 60. Adult piranhas are normally 6–10 in. in length, though rare 24 in.-long specimens have been reported. Most North American residents know piranhas from their depiction in horror films and novels, where schools of the carnivorous fish devour humans and livestock within minutes. That reputation, and official fears of the piranhas' impact on native fish populations, has prompted 24 U.S. states to outlaw private ownership of piranhas, though other states permit their sale and illegal smuggling continues.

Pacu belong to the same family as piranhas and normally live in the same South American rivers. They closely resemble piranhas, except for their blunt teeth, which render

them harmless to humans. They also exceed the piranha in size, with a record length of 40 in. Pacu normally feed on plants, insects, and small fish, but never stage the mass attacks on larger prey depicted in so many films about piranhas. Pacu are not generally banned in the United States, although authorities discourage their release. As of 2007, specimens have been caught in the wild in the following U.S. states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Piranhas also turn up where they do not belong, including:

- Ohio: In August 1975, fishermen caught one piranha and saw another in the Rocky River, near London.
- Michigan: Picnickers found a dead piranha beached at a lake near Ann Arbor in 1977. Jim Tourtillott caught a piranha at Dollar Bay in June 2006.
- Massachusetts: A 5-in. piranha was caught at the Lexington Reservoir in August 1981, followed by others at Abingdon (August 1984), Westminster (July 1985), and Woburn (summer 1993).
- Virginia: Fishermen caught a piranha at Indian Lake, in August 1987.
- Nebraska: A 12-in. specimen was caught at Harlon County Lake (September 1987), with three more found dead in a drain near North Platte (January 2000).
- Texas: In 1991, a 5-in. piranha was caught in Kendall County's Boerne City Reservoir.
- France: Two piranhas were pulled from the Garonne River (1991), followed by two more at Lac de la Ganguise, near Toulouse (1996).
- Rhode Island: A fisherman hooked a piranha at the Flat River Reservoir in summer 1991.
- Hawaii: Piranhas were sighted at Oahu's Wahiawa Reservoir in June 1992, and the first specimen was caught in February 1993.
- Minnesota: Fishermen caught a piranha at Durban Lake in July 1993, and at Simley Pond in August 1998.
- Oklahoma: A 6.6-in. piranha was found dead in a pond on a college campus in Stillwater (November 1993).
- Russia: Fisherman Boris Belov suffered bites from a piranha he caught at Staraya Surka Lake in June 2000.
- Indiana: A 2.5-lb. piranha was pulled from Bloomington's Griffy Lake in July 2001.
- England: A seagull dropped a small piranha on the deck of a Thames fishing boat in February 2004. Four months later police found two dead piranhas in a pond at Middleton. In October 2006, a teenager hooked a 3-lb. piranha at a pond in Manchester.
- Illinois: Edward Reinhart caught a piranha while fishing in the Des Plaines River in July 2006.
- North Carolina: James Melton caught a piranha while fishing in the Catawba River near Mount Holly, in June 2007.

Further Reading: Schleser, D. *Piranhas*. (Hauppauge, NY: Barron's, 2008).

PYTHONS

Pythons are non-venomous snakes whose natural habitat ranges from Africa eastward through Asia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, and New Guinea. Science currently recognizes 26 python species, ranging in size from the 28-in. pygmy python to the reticulated python, regarded by most herpetologists as the world's longest snake.

Sales of exotic reptiles, legal or otherwise, have sent pythons to every country in the world, sometimes with startling results. Florida wildlife authorities acknowledge a breeding population of Burmese pythons in Everglades National Park, where more than 300 specimens have been caught or killed since the late 1990s. One such snake, measuring 13 ft., made global headlines in 2005, when it burst while trying to swallow a 6-ft. alligator.

The problem of misplaced pythons is not new, however, nor is it confined to Florida's swampland. A sampling of recorded incidents include the following:

- April 1897: An agent of the Smithsonian Institution reportedly used chloroform to capture of a 34.5-ft. python at Snake Key in Monroe County, Florida.
- August 1897: Farmer Newton McCrary killed a 16-ft. snake resembling a python near Lock Springs, Missouri.
- August 1901: Hikers killed a python 7 ft., 4 in. long outside Presque Isle, Pennsylvania.
- September 1931: Hunters failed to locate a 12-ft. python seen repeatedly in Pennsylvania's Mont Alto State Forest.
- June 1944: Ohio police and civilians searched in vain for the 18-ft. "Peninsula Python," reported by multiple witnesses at various locations between Akron and Cleveland.
- October 1954: Zoo officials and police failed in their efforts to recapture "Python Pete," an 18-ft. escapee from the Fort Worth Zoo.
- January 2003: Police pulled a 14.5-ft. python from a canal in Edgbaston, England.
- June 2003: An 8-ft. python was found in the Blackwell Forest Preserve, near Warrenville, Illinois.
- February 2004: Campers killed a 15-ft. python near Mulberry, Kansas.
- September 2005: British police caught a 12-ft. python at Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire.
- June 2005: Authorities caught a 12-ft. python in Monmouthshire, Wales.
- August 2005: A resident of Hobart, Indiana found an 8-ft. python in her yard.
- August 2005: Residents of Kuliouou, Hawaii found a 3.5-ft. python in their garage.
- May 2006: Dan McBride found a 2-ft. python in his rental car, in Paducah, Kentucky.
- September 2006: Police recaptured a 14-ft. python that escaped after killing its owner in Lanesville, Indiana.
- April 2007: Officers found a dead python measuring 17 ft., 8 in. beside a road in Cloughton, England.
- October 2007: A resident of Brooklyn, New York found a 7-ft. python in her toilet.

Further Reading: Arment, C. *Boss Snakes*. (Landisville, PA: Coachwhip, 2008); Mott, M. "Invasive Pythons Squeezing Florida Everglades," *National Geographic News* (Oct. 28, 2005).

SNAKEHEAD FISH

Science recognizes 33 species of freshwater fish in the family *Channidae*, commonly known as snakeheads. All are aggressive predators distinguished by their long dorsal fins, small heads with large scales on top, and large mouths bristling with sharp teeth. Various species range from 10 in. in length (dwarf snakeheads) to more than 3 ft., with a record weight exceeding 60 lbs. Equipped with primitive lungs, snakeheads often walk overland on their stubby fins and may live out of water for up to three days. Snakeheads are natives of Asia, where they are raised commercially for food, but U.S. officials now rank them as a dangerous invasive species, with possession banned by law in 13 states.

Snakeheads made their first American appearance at California's Silverwood Lake, where a lone specimen was caught in 1987, but most journalists ignored the fish until a spawning population was found in a pond at Crofton, Maryland in 1992. Two years later, Maryland authorities acknowledged an established snakehead population in the Potomac River, and other colonies are ranked as possibly established in Florida. Individual specimens have been caught in lakes or ponds in Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Sightings of snakeheads, without any specimens captured, have also been reported in Alabama, Maine, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The snakehead fish, native to Asia, now infests North America and other continents as an unwelcome exotic species. (AP Photo/Ed Wray)

While wildlife authorities are most concerned about the snakeheads' impact on native fish and other aquatic species, the invaders—sometimes dubbed "Frankenfish" for their strange appearance—have also made their mark in Hollywood. Thus far, fictitious man-eating snakeheads have featured in four horror films, including *Night of the Snakehead Fish* (2003), *Snakehead Terror* (2004), *Frankenfish* (2004), and *Swarm of the Snakehead* (2006).

Further Reading: Dolin, E. *Snakehead: A Fish Out of Water*. (Washington: Smithsonian, 2003).

3

OUT OF TIME

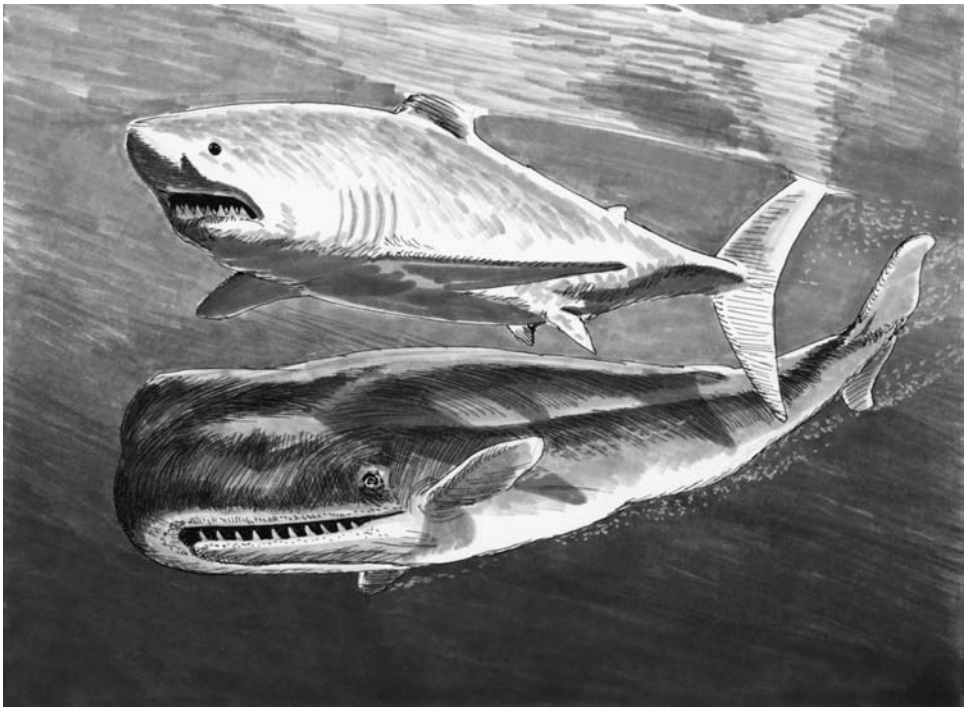
Our world is filled with "living fossils"—a term coined by Charles Darwin in his book *The Origin of Species* (1859) to describe species surviving from prehistoric times to the present without significant physical change. Darwin cited Australia's platypus and the South American lungfish as prime examples, but many other creatures fit the same description. Included on the list are cockroaches (unchanged for 350 million years), horseshoe crabs (300 million years), sturgeon (250 million years), dragonflies (230 million years), crocodiles (230 million years), and army ants (100 million years). The most dramatic case of a living fossil involves the coelacanth, a primitive fish believed extinct for 65 million years—until fisherman caught one alive off the coast of South Africa in December 1938. Another was caught in 1952, but photos of live coelacanths in their natural habitat were not obtained until 1988. Between 1991 and 2007, coelacanth populations were found off the coasts of Mozambique, Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, and the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. At least 90 more previously-thought extinct species have been rediscovered since 1938, a fact cryptozoologists bear in mind as they investigate sightings of others yet unverified throughout the world.

CARCHARODON MEGALODON

Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz gave this prehistoric shark its scientific name, meaning "big tooth," in 1835. Based on similarities between its teeth and those of the great white shark, Agassiz classified them as relatives, but some modern ichthyologists dispute that claim. Reconstruction of the shark's jaw in 1909, using the largest teeth available, produced a 120-ft. monster, but subsequent estimates range from 50 to 80 ft long. In either case, and by any name, megalodon remains the largest shark known to science.

Is it still alive?

Most ichthyologists believe megalodon died out around 1.5 million years ago, but fossil evidence suggests that they are wrong. The British research ship *Challenger* dredged up two



Modern witnesses report sightings of whale-sized sharks resembling the "extinct" megalodon. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

megalodon teeth from the Atlantic, at a depth of 14,000 feet, in 1875. Dr. Wladomir Tschernezky analyzed the teeth at London's Queen Mary College in 1959, and reported that one was 24,000 years old and the other no more than 11,000 years old. His findings lend credence to several reports of giant sharks resembling great whites recorded during the 20th century.

- 1918: Australian fishermen reported an encounter with a monstrous shark near Broughton Island, off the coast of New South Wales. The shark swallowed several 3-ft.-wide crayfish traps with "pots, mooring lines, and all." Estimates of its length exceeded 100 feet, perhaps exaggerated by fear. All agreed that the beast was a shark "of the White Death type," and not a whale.
- 1927: American novelist Zane Gray saw a shark longer than his 40-ft. boat while fishing off the Polynesian island of Rangiroa.
- 1933: Gray's son, Loren, saw a nearly-identical shark while sailing 100 miles northwest of Rangiroa. He described it as 40 to 50 ft. long, with a head 10 to 12 ft. wide, and insisted that it was not a whale shark.
- 1950s: Author Thomas Helm watched a large shark resembling a great white swim under his 60-ft. boat in the Gulf of Mexico. Helm said that the fish "was not an inch less than 30 feet" long, and that when it was under the fishing boat, its pectoral fins protruded on either side.
- March 1954: While riding out a storm near Timor, Indonesia, sailors aboard the *Rachel Cohen* felt a violent blow against the keel. They later found 17 shark's teeth embed-

ded in the hull, averaging 4 in. long and 3 in. wide. Ichthyologist John Randall, at Hawaii's Bishop Museum, estimated the shark must have been 36–46 ft. long.

While no megalodon has yet been killed or caught alive, the species enjoys a measure of celebrity through horror novels and films. Novels involving relict megalodons include Charles Wilson's *Extinct* (1997), Cari McKnight's *From the Dark Below* (2001), and a whole series from author Steve Alten: *Meg* (1997), *The Trench* (2000), *Meg: Primal Waters* (2004), and *Meg: Hell's Aquarium* (2008). Films depicting megalodons at large include *Shark Hunter* (2001), *Shark Attack 3: Megalodon* (2002), *Megalodon* (2004), and the Austrian production *Hai-Alarm auf Mallorca* (2004).

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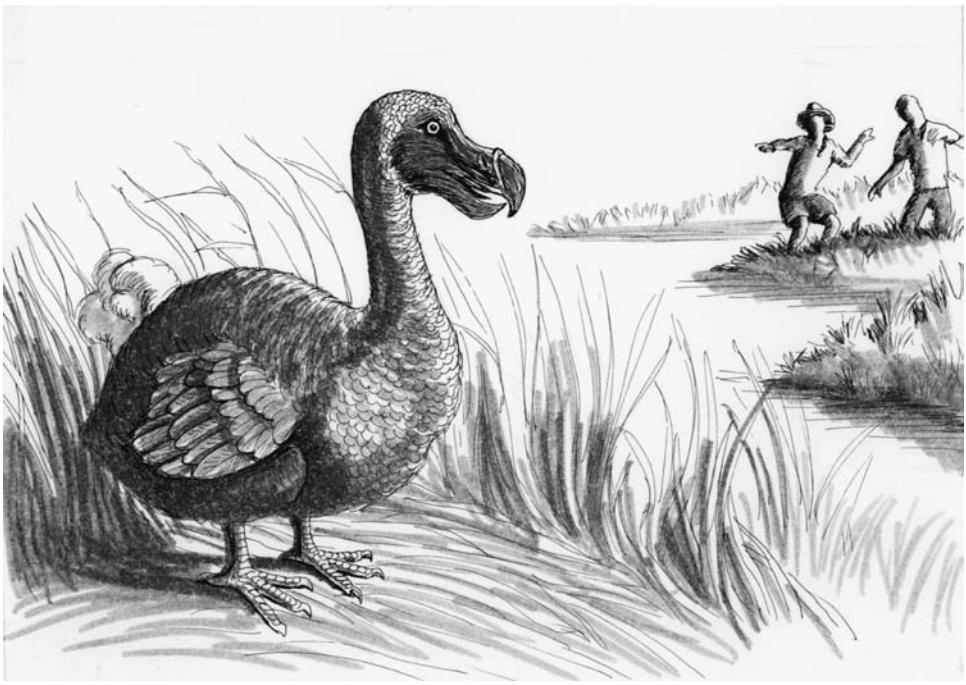
DODOS

The dodo was a flightless bird related to doves and pigeons, native to the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. Adults stood up to 3 ft. tall, weighed over 40 pounds, and nested on the ground—all of which made them and their eggs easy prey for hungry sailors and their dogs between the discovery of Mauritius in 1507 and the dodo's supposed extinction in 1690. The last known dodo specimen, preserved at Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum, was discarded in 1755. A dodo egg may still be viewed at South Africa's London Museum, and skeletal remains found in 2005 are displayed at Oxford's Museum of Natural History.



Reports suggest that dodos may survive on certain remote islands. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

No one knows how many dodos were slaughtered for food or sport in the 16th and 17th centuries, but mainstream science insists that the birds are extinct. Since 1891, the phrase "dead as a dodo" has described any situation where life or hope is irrevocably lost, yet there may be hope for the dodo's survival.

In the 1930s, natives of Mauritius told researcher Lawrence Green that dodos still lived in some of the island's more remote caves. Green found none, but cryptozoologist William Gibbons heard similar stories 50 years later and led two dodo-hunting expeditions in the 1990s. Gibbons returned empty-handed, but Dr. Roy Mackal suggests that hunters may be searching the wrong islands.

Specifically, Mackal cites reports of dodos seen on Nazareth Island (now Île Tromelin), 375 miles northwest of Mauritius, in 1638. No modern searchers have pursued that lead, but Mackal notes that other islands in the Indian Ocean—including the heavily forested Carajos Shoals (235 miles north of Mauritius)—remain virtually unexplored today. Meanwhile, plans to clone dodos from preserved DNA, announced from Mauritius in September 2002, have thus far produced no results.

Further Reading: Fuller, E. *The Dodo.* (Piermont, NH: Bunker Hill, 2003); Pinto-Correia, C. *Return of the Crazy Bird.* (New York: Springer, 2003).

IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER

This bird was (or is) the second-largest woodpecker on earth and the largest known from North America, measuring 20 in. long, with a 30-in. wingspan. As the name suggests, ivory-bills are distinguished from their nearest relative, the pileated woodpecker, chiefly by the color of their bills (chalky-white in juveniles, ivory in adults). Their distinctive call, often described as "kent-kent-kent," may also help to identify the birds without a visual sighting.

Science recognized the ivory-billed woodpecker in 1758, and civilization soon began the task of destroying its habitat in hardwood forests and pine swamps. Once found from eastern Texas through the American South to Florida and the Carolinas, and with a thriving population on the island of Cuba, ivory-bills suffered 160 years of unrestricted hunting and assaults on their environment, Only an estimated 20 specimens survived in the wild by 1938. The last confirmed wild specimen, a female, vanished when loggers razed its Louisiana home in 1944. Although widely regarded as extinct from that date onward, ivory-bills were officially listed as endangered in March 1967, and then judged extinct by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1994.

In spite of these rulings, alleged sightings continue. Among them:

- 1971: Photographer Fielding Lewis produced two photos of ivory-bills, claiming they were snapped at different times in Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin. Critics suggest that the photos were faked, since both birds appear to stand in roughly the same position.
- 1994: Journalist John O'Donnell-Rosales reported sightings from the Alabama Coastal Delta, but state wildlife authorities declined to investigate.
- April 1999: Zoology student David Kulivan claimed a sighting of two ivory-bills in Louisiana's Pearl River Wildlife Management Area. Biologists from Louisiana State University delayed their search until January 2002 and returned 30 days later

with audio recordings of a possible woodpecker's call.

- June 2002: Scientists from Cornell University visited the Pearl River swamps, recording bird sounds that proved, on further analysis, to be distant gunshots.
- February 2004: Multiple sightings of a male ivory-bill emerged from the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Monroe County, Arkansas, prompting Cornell University to launch another expedition.
- April 2004: Cornell researchers in Arkansas caught a possible ivory-bill on videotape. On April 28, Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology published a report in *Science*, citing the video and further audio recordings as proof that ivory-bills survive in Arkansas—and, by extension, perhaps elsewhere.

A male ivory-billed woodpecker, stuffed and on display at the New York State Museum. (AP Photo/Jim McKnight)

Cornell's finding did not end the controversy. In June 2005, ornithologists from three rival universities published an article claiming that Cornell's evidence was "not sufficient to support this startling conclusion" of ivory-bill survival. A March 2006 article in *Science* by David Sibley contends that the Arkansas videotape depicts a pileated woodpecker. Cornell's authors stood by their original conclusion but canceled a new expedition scheduled for May 2006.

Meanwhile, new sightings of an ivory-billed woodpecker emerged from Louisiana's Pearl River region in February 2006. Four months later, spokesmen for a research team led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offered a $10,000 reward for information leading biologists to a verified ivory-billed woodpecker's nest. The reward has not been collected, but September 2006 brought new claims of ivory-bill survival from scientists at Alabama's Auburn University and Canada's University of Windsor. Evidence supporting that report included 14 eyewitness sightings and 300 audio recordings of supposed ivory-bill calls.

Despite those hopeful tidings, media reports from Washington in January 2008 suggested that further research on the ivory-bills might be canceled due to rising costs, if an actual specimen or reliable DNA evidence is not obtained by year's end. In that case, searchers fear, the woodpeckers might once again be written off as lost.

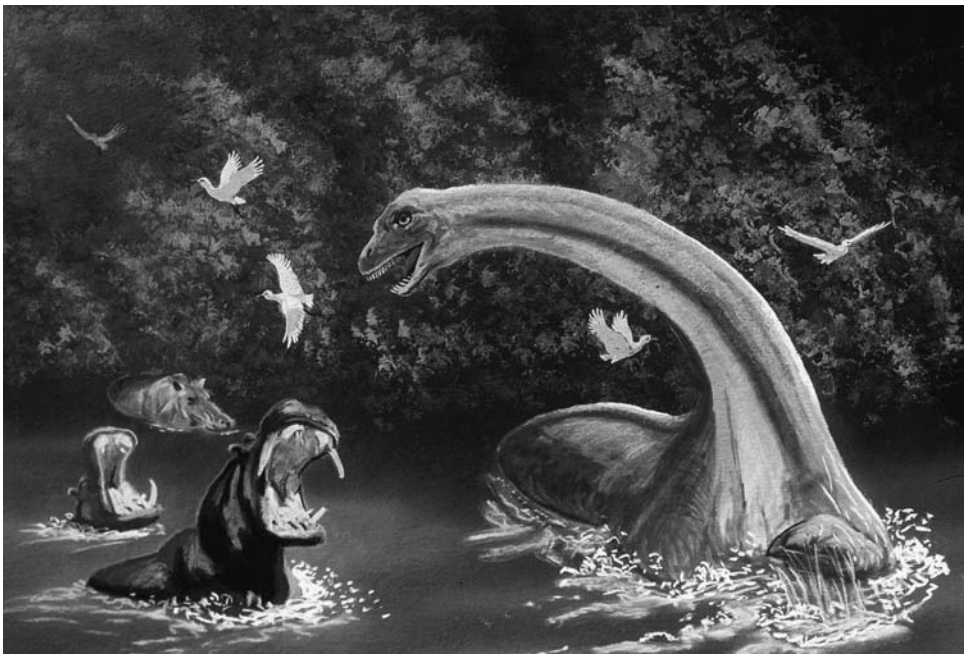
Further Reading: Gallagher, T. *The Grail Bird*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Hill, G. *Ivorybill Hunters*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Steinberg, M. *Stalking the Ghost Bird*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

LIVING DINOSAURS

Dinosaurs ("terrible lizards" in Latin) were land-dwelling reptiles that inhabited the earth from the late Triassic period (230 million years ago) through the Cretaceous period (ending 65 million years ago). Science divides them into two groups, based on pelvic structure: *Saurischians* ("lizard-hips") and *Ornithischians* ("bird-hips"). The list of dinosaurs *does not* properly include any flying reptiles (*pterosaurs*), aquatic reptiles (*ichthyosaurs, plesiosaurs,* and *mosasaurs*), or any other prehistoric reptiles living prior to the Triassic period (such as the sail-backed *Dimetrodon,* often depicted in science-fiction films).

While scientific understanding of dinosaurs and their lifestyles has constantly evolved since 1677, when the first known species (*Megalosaurus*) was scientifically described, and theories of dinosaur extinction remain subject to heated debate, mainstream scientists agree unanimously on one point: dinosaurs *are extinct*. However, it should come as no surprise by this point in our journey that reports of living dinosaurs have persisted to the present day, from jungle tracks in Africa, Asia and South America to some startling locations much closer to home.

The first recent report of living dinosaurs appeared in 1776, when French priest Abbé Lievain Bonaventure Proyart published a book describing his experiences in the part of Africa comprising modern Cameroon, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo. Proyart related tribal stories of a beast known as *mokele-mbembe* ("one who stops the flow of rivers"), noting that the creature "was not seen but . . . must have been monstrous: the marks of the claws were noted on the ground, and these formed a print about three feet in circumference."



Sightings of supposed living dinosaurs persist from parts of Africa. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

More than 130 years later, in 1909, famed animal collector Carl Hagenbeck referred to mokele-mbembe, noting that, "on the walls of certain caverns in Central Africa there are to be found actual drawings of this strange creature. From what I have heard of the animal, it seems to me that it can only be some kind of dinosaur, seemingly akin to the brontosaurus. As the stories come from so many different sources, and all tend to substantiate each other, I am almost convinced that some such reptile must still be in existence."

In 1910, the German government sent Captain Freiherr von Stein zu Lausnitz to explore the Cameroons and West Africa. He, too, filed reports on mokele-mbembe, noting that "the animal is said to be of a brownish-gray color with a smooth skin, its size approximately that of an elephant; at least that of a hippopotamus. It is said to have a long and very flexible neck and only one tooth but a very long one; some say it is a horn. A few spoke about a long muscular tail like that of an alligator."

In November 1919, *The Times* of London published a report from the Belgian Congo describing an attack on a native village by a large, three-horned reptile resembling a triceratops. One month later, Captain Leicester Stevens launched a safari to kill the creature, but he never found it. British adventurer Alfred Smith added a new reptile to the mix in 1927, known to natives of Cameroon as *Jago-nini* ("giant diver") or *N'yamala* ("mother of canoes"). The scaly monster left three-toed footprints the size of frying pans and killed manatees. "Behind the Cameroons," Smith wrote, "there's things living we know nothing about."

Naturalists Gerald Russell and Ivan Sanderson found huge hippo-like tracks along the Mainyu River, in northern Cameroon, in 1932. Soon afterward, while canoeing past a cave, they saw a huge roaring beast erupt from the water nearby. Fortunately, it did not pursue them. Sanderson claimed the creature's head was as large as a full-grown hippopotamus. Five years after that encounter, the journal *Discovery* published an article by William Hichens, former British magistrate in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), titled "African Mystery Beasts." One of those he described was "a gigantic lizard, with a neck like a giraffe, legs like an elephant's, a small snake-like head and a tail thirty feet long." Witness Alan Brignall glimpsed a similar long-necked reptile near Lake Bangweulu, Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in May 1954. In 1959, a tribe of Congo pygmies allegedly killed a mokele-mbembe at Lake Télé, and then died from food poisoning after eating its flesh.

No more dinosaur reports emerged from Africa until 1976, when herpetologist James Powell heard fresh tales from villagers in Gabon. Inspired by those stories, Dr. Roy Mackal from the University of Chicago led two expeditions, in 1980 and 1981, to find the creature. Mackal's team collected more first-hand sightings, but failed to see the beast themselves. Mackal also heard tales of two other large reptiles roaming the Congo. One, the *Emela-ntouka* ("killer of elephants") reportedly gored pachyderms with a long ivory horn. The other, called *Mbielu-mbielu-mbielu*, had bony "planks" on its back and resembled a *stegosaurus*. Meanwhile, rival hunter Herman Regusters claimed a sighting of mokele-mbembe at Lake Télé, in December 1981, but produced no supporting evidence. Congolese zoologist Marcellin Agnagna photographed a supposed dinosaur at Lake Télé in May 1983, from a distance of 780 feet, but the blurry film reveals no helpful details.

Cryptozoologist William Gibbons led his first expedition to Africa in 1985, and returned there in 1997 and 2000. While living dinosaurs remained elusive, Gibbons and his team penetrated regions previously unexplored by non-native hunters and collected tribal tales of huge reptiles locally known as *Ngoubou* (resembling triceratops) and *Li'kelabembe* (a long-necked beast identical to mokele-mbembe).

South America has also produced its share of live dinosaur sightings. In 1883, the journal *Scientific American* reported that a long-necked reptile measuring 40 ft. had been killed on the Río Bene, in Bolivia. In 1907, German explorers Franz Schmidt and Rudolph Pleng allegedly met a 35-ft. reptile in Peru's Loretto Department. Its long neck was topped by a head "the size of a beer keg," and resembling a tapir's. Before his disappearance in 1925, British adventurer Percy Fawcett relayed tales of dinosaur-like creatures prowling the Madidi and Río Guaporé regions of Brazil. In 1931, Swedish explorer Harald Westin saw a 20-ft. reptile near the Rio Mamoré, on the border between Brazil and Bolivia. The beast was a quadruped with a head resembling an alligator's and a body like "a distended boa constrictor." Fifteen years later, author Leonard Clark collected tales of long-necked dinosaurs from tribesmen along Peru's Río Marañon. As late as 1975 an elderly Brazilian hunting guide warned clients about 18-ft. reptiles that capsized canoes and killed their occupants in the Amazon Basin.

Residents of Papua New Guinea reported sightings of a large reptile resembling a bipedal dinosaur in December 1999, and again in March 2004. On both occasions, soldiers and police turned out to search the areas where villagers had seen a "very huge and ugly-looking animal" with a head resembling a dog's and a tail like a crocodile's. Witness Christine Samei said the beast she saw in 2004 was "as fat as a 900-litre [238-gallon] water tank." Another witness said the beast's hind legs were "as thick as coconut palm tree trunks," while its forelegs were smaller. Hopeful cryptozoologists speculated that it might be a relict *Iguanodon*, but searchers found nothing.

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MAMMOTHS

Mammoths were relatives of modern elephants that evolved on earth around 4.8 million years ago; they were covered in shaggy hair and armed with long, curved tusks. Early humans hunted them, and hey appear in many prehistoric cave paintings throughout the world. Paleontologists believe that mammoths died out at the close of the last Ice Age, around 4,500 years ago. Their remains—some frozen and seemingly fresh—have been found in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The discoveries of mammoth carcasses with hair and skin intact apparently gave rise to Chinese legends of the *Yen-shŭ*, a giant "self-concealing rat" that burrows underground. More startling, however, are the eyewitness reports suggesting that mammoths survived into historical times—and may still be living today.

The first report of a living mammoth emerged from Russia in 1581, when Cossack chieftain Yermak Timofeyevich reported sighting a hairy elephant in the eastern foothills of the Ural Mountains. While skeptics claim that mammoth sightings arise from the discovery of frozen remains, we should note that the first mammoth bones were not found until 1726, and mammoths were not recognized as a separate species of elephant until 1796. The first intact mammoth was found in 1806, 225 years *after* Timofeyevich's sighting.

In October 1899, *McClure's Magazine* published an article by H. Tukeman, describing the supposed killing of a mammoth in Alaska during 1890. According to that story, Tukeman had met an elderly Native American guide at Fort Yukon, who claimed that an elephant

lived in a nearby valley. Tukeman and the guide, known only as "Joe," struck off for the spot and found a live mammoth, which Tukeman then killed with his rifle. Tukeman and Joe ate part of the carcass, which they found "not unpalatable, but terribly tough." Afterward, they buried the rest and Tukeman returned to his home in San Francisco, where he told a scientist—a Mr. Conradi—about his adventure. Conradi offered to buy the mammoth's remains, and Tukeman retrieved them from Alaska, whereupon Conradi donated them to the Smithsonian Institution and claimed he had found them frozen in arctic ice. When curious readers wrote to *McClure's* for more details, the magazine's editor dismissed Tukeman's report as "realistic fiction" which was "not intended to deceive."

The next alleged mammoth sighting, by a Siberian hunter, occurred in 1918 but remained unpublished until 1946. The witness found oval footprints 27 in. wide and 20 in. long, separated by 13-ft. strides, and followed them until he saw "a huge elephant with big white tusks, very curved. It was dark chestnut color as far as I could see. It had fairly long hair on the hind-quarters, but it seemed shorter in front." Moments later, the hunter glimpsed a second mammoth moving through the nearby woods. Instead of shooting them, he turned and fled.

Four decades passed between publication of that report and the next, in 1984. The latest report came from Thailand, where Princess Rangsrinopadorn Yukol videotaped surprisingly hairy specimens during a forestry survey in Chiang Mai Province. A search for the supposed mammoth was announced in December 2000. Professor Naris Poompakohan, of Bangkok's Kasetsart University, examined still photos made from the 1984 videotape and suggested that the animals depicted were normal Asian elephants that somehow had failed to shed their juvenile hair.

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MAPINGUARI

Mystery surrounds this South American cryptid, described by some witnesses as a hairy primate 5–6 ft. tall and known for vicious attacks on livestock, and reported by others to be a quadruped that sometimes stands erect to eat the leaves of trees. Today, some researchers believe that tales of the *mapinguari* ("roaring animal") involve sightings of a relict creature from prehistoric times, mixed up further by infusions of mythology.

David Oren, an American ornithologist who completed his Harvard doctorate in Brazil during the late 1970s, believes the classic mapinguari is actually a relict *mylodon*—a prehistoric ground sloth known from fossils found in Argentina and presumed extinct for 10,000 years. In life, the mylodon stood more than 10 ft. tall on its hind legs and weighed around 450 lbs. Its thick hide was studded with pebble-like bones which shielded it from predators.

Evidence of possible mylodon survival into historical times includes a sketch of an apparent Mylodon in a Chinese text, *The Illustrated Record of Strange Countries,* written in 1430; a similar drawing appeared on a map of South America prepared by Turkish navigator Piri Reis in 1513; Charles Darwin's discovery of mylodon bones with skin still attached on a beach at Bahia Blanca, Argentina in 1834; and the 1895 recovery of fresh-looking mylodon skin from a Patagonian cave. Those skin samples prompted several expeditions in the early 20th century, but none found living mylodons.

Dr. Oren heard those stories and dismissed them until 1984, when eyewitness reports convinced him that the mapinguari might exist. Nine years later, Oren published a report through Belém's Goeldi Institute, nominating the mylodon as a prime mapinguari suspect. He initially believed that mapinguari legends sprang from ancient native encounters with ground sloths before the species died out, but by 2001 Oren had interviewed some 200 witnesses who claimed encounters with living mapinguaris. Seven of those were hunters who had allegedly killed specimens, although none preserved any proof. Witness Geovaldo Karitiana reported a sighting in 2004, while hunting near a site his Karitiana tribe calls "the cave of the mapinguari," but claimed the beast's foul odor made him faint before he could shoot it.

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MOA

Moas were flightless birds indigenous to New Zealand, distinguished from related cassowaries, emus, kiwis, and ostriches by their complete lack of wings. Science recognizes 15 species, including two giants (from the genus *Dinornis*) that reached 13 ft. in height and weighed more than 500 lbs. Females were larger than males, exceeding their height by 150 percent and more than doubling their weight. Mainstream zoologists believe that Māori hunters drove all moa species to extinction by 1500, 142 years before Dutch explorers discovered New Zealand, but some researchers disagree.

Joel Polack, a British trader who lived in New Zealand from 1831–50, reported claims by Māori tribesmen that moa still survived in isolated regions of the South Island. Naturalist William Colenso heard tales of living moas on the North Island, in 1838, but never managed to find one. In April 1850, a seal-hunter found moa bones with flesh still attached at Molyneux Harbor, on the South Island. Eleven years later, surveyors charting the land between Riwaka and Takaka (South Island) found fresh avian footprints measuring 14 in. long and 11 in. wide. In 1868, Māori tribesmen allegedly saw seven moas and killed one at Preservation Inlet (South Island), but no evidence remained when Sir George Grey questioned them.

Moa sightings continued through the 20th century. A zoologist glimpsed one of the extinct birds in 1960, on the South Island. In 1967, a government naturalist emerged from the South Island's Fiordland wilderness to claim "definite, concrete, fresh evidence of the continued existence of a small species of moa," but details remain elusive. Jim Stratton saw an 11-ft. bird in May 1991, near the South Island's Waimakariri River. An alleged sighting of two moas by German tourists in May 1992 proved to be a hoax, but investigation failed to disprove the lone moa sighting logged by three hikers from Craigieburn Forest Park (South Island) in January 1999. Dr. Keith Armstrong announced a five-year survey in Fiordland, beginning in July 1999, but its results remain unpublished. Meanwhile, Australian cryptozoologist Rex Gilroy made plaster casts of 9.5-in. bird tracks found in the North Island's Urewera National Park in September 2001.

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SABER-TOOTHED CAT

Modern science recognizes 41 genera of prehistoric saber-toothed cats, including 126 different species. They inhabited Europe, Africa, Australia, and North and South America at various times during the Cenozoic Era, with the oldest species (*Hoplophoneus*) appearing around 34 million years ago and the latest (*Smilodon*) presumably dying out some 8,000 years ago. All species derive their popular name from large fangs in the upper jaw, measuring up to 8 in. long. The Australian saber-tooth, *Thylacosmilus*, was a marsupial form whose fossil remains have also been found in Argentina.

While saber-tooths coexisted with early humans and may have sampled human flesh at times, all mainstream scientists agree that they are now extinct. Meanwhile, sightings of large, unidentified cats with oversized fangs still emerge from Australia, from at least 10 African nations, and six countries in South America.

Australia's saber-tooth appeared at Byaduk, Victoria, in 1969. Witness Les Rentsch described it as resembling a cougar with gray fur and noteworthy for its two unusually long fangs.

In sub-Saharan Africa, with 47 nations sharing more than 1,800 languages, mystery cats are known by many different names. Many are described as amphibious species or dwellers in riverside caves. Alphabetically, they include:

- *Coje ya menia* ("water lion"): A large nocturnal hunter found along Angola's Cuango and Cuanza Rivers, where it kills hippos.
- *Dilali* ("water lion"): A man-eating cat found in or near rivers in Chad and the Central African Republic, recognized by its mane, long fangs, and shaggy legs.
- *Dingonek* ("water lion"): A spotted cat reaching lengths of 18 ft., found along rivers in Kenya that flow into Lake Victoria.
- *Gassingram:* A cave-dwelling predator found in the Central African Republic.
- *Hadjel:* A lion-sized cat with a prominent mane and a short tail, sighted in the Ouadai region of southwestern Chad.
- *Mamaimé* ("water lion"): A large cat feared by members of the Central African Republic's Sangho tribe.
- *Mouro n'gou* ("water leopard"): A cat 8–12 ft. long, with striped or spotted fur, inhabiting caves along Chad's Chari River and several rivers in the Central African Republic. When not killing hippos, it drags humans out of canoes.
- *Ngoroli* ("water elephant"): Another amphibious species found in the Central African Republic's Vovodo River, where it grows to 10 ft. in length and stands 4.5 ft. tall, reportedly killing hippos and crocodiles.
- *Nsanga:* An amphibious predator found in Zambia's Bangweulu Swamp, where conflicting reports describe it as a large cat or a reptile.
- *Ntambo wa luy* ("water lion"): Reported from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where different tribes also call it *natambue ya mai* and *simba ya mai*.
- *Nyo-kodoing:* A saber-tooth species reported from Sudan.
- *Nzefu-loï* ("water elephant"): Found in or near the Lualaba River and adjacent lakes, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Baluba tribesmen describe it as hippo-sized, with long tusks and a shaggy tail.

- *Nze-ti-gou* ("water panther"): Described by Sangho tribesmen in the Central African Republic as a nocturnal predator living near rivers.
- *Ol-maima:* Another feline predator reported from Kenya.
- *Tigre de montagne* ("mountain tiger"): Larger than a lion, with reddish fur sometimes showing white stripes, reported in the mountainous regions of Chad, the Central African Republic, and Senegal into the 1970s.
- *Vassoko:* A local name used for the *tigre de montagne* in parts of the Central African Republic.
- *Wanjilanko:* A large cat said to kill lions in Senegal's Casamance forest.

Reports of saber-tooths in South America date from 1863, when explorers found stone carvings of the prehistoric cats at Timana, New Grenada (now Colombia). Cave paintings of saber-toothed cats and other prehistoric mammals have also been found in Argentina's Santa Cruz province, but evidence is not restricted to ancient artwork. Reports of living mystery cats include:

- 1752: Explorer Thomas Falkner saw a donkey-sized cat, known to natives as *yaquaru,* dive into Argentina's Río Paraná.
- 1962: Residents of Guyana blamed a cat known as *maipolina* ("water tiger") or *popoké* ("water mother") for killing and partially devouring a boy found in the Maroni River near Maripasoula, French Guiana, on October 21.
- 1966: Author Peter Matthiessen, in his book *The Cloud Forest,* recounted an interview with a French sailor named Picquet, who described his meeting with a striped cat slightly smaller than a jaguar, having "two very large protruding teeth," known to residents of Colombia and Ecuador.
- 1975: Zoologist Juan Acavar examined a "mutant jaguar" shot in Paraguay and claimed it was a living *Smilodon.* The remains were not preserved.
- 1977: Author Bruce Chatwin chronicled modern reports of the *yaquaru* from Patagonia, in southern Argentina.
- 1989: Witness Juan Bautista Rivadeneira glimpsed a black "water tiger" on Río Jurumbaino, in southeastern Ecuador.

Further Reading: Eberhart, G. *Mysterious Creatures.* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2002); Shuker, K. *Mystery Cats of the World.* (London: Robert Hale, 1989).

STELLER'S SEA COW

During the winter of 1741–42, while shipwrecked on Bering Island in the Komandorski chain between Kamchatka and the Aleutians, German naturalist Georg Steller discovered a new species of sirenian mammals that were named in his honor. Steller's sea cow was the largest known sirenian, with a record length of 25 ft., 8 in., more than double the size of its nearest relatives, the dugongs and manatees. According to Steller, "The animal never comes out on shore, but always lives in the water. Its skin is black and thick, like the bark of an old oak . . . , its head in proportion to the body is small . . . , it has no teeth, but only two flat white bones—one above, the other below."

Some researchers believe that Steller's sea cow may not be extinct. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

Fossils prove that Steller's sea cow once inhabited the North Pacific from Japan to California, but discovery by humans spelled disaster for the species. Hunted for their skins and blubber, which was eaten as a butter substitute and used to fuel oil-burning lamps, the species was officially extinct by 1768, a mere 30 years after Steller saw the first specimens. Still, as in so many other cases, sightings have continued into modern times. They include:

- 1780: Bering Island villagers claim to have killed several sea cows missed in earlier hunts.
- 1854: Two witnesses report a sea cow swimming off the coast of Bering Island.
- 1881: Finnish explorer Adolf Nordenskiöld contends that sea cows survived among the Komandorski Islands until the late 1850s.
- 1885: Polish naturalist Benedykt Dybowski claims that small populations of sea cows survived until 1830.
- 1910: Russian sailors report a sea-cow sighting from Siberia's Gulf of Anadyr.
- 1950s: Ivan Skripkin, a Russian whaler, describes a population of sea cows that migrates to waters around Bering Island each July.
- 1962: Crewmen aboard the Russian whaler *Buran* sight six sea cows near Cape Navarin, Siberia, in July.
- 1976: Fisherman Ivan Chechulin claims a summer sighting in the same vicinity, below Cape Navarin at Anapkinskaya Bay.

- 2006: An article published in the *Chinook Observer* (Long Beach, Wash.) on September 13 reports summer sightings of a 12-ft. manatee seen 40 miles offshore. Unlike Steller's sea cow, manatees normally prefer coastal waters above 60°F, but one specimen did swim from Florida to Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay in the summer of 2006.

Skeptics maintain that recent sea cow witnesses have actually seen northern elephant seals, which may reach 16 ft. in length and weigh 5,000 lbs., or perhaps female narwhals, an Arctic cetacean that grows to 26 ft. Male narwhals sport a distinctive tusk (or two) which may exceed 9 ft. in length, but females rarely display that appendage. Without a specimen, the mystery remains unsolved.

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THYLACINE

Before the arrival of Dutch explorers in 1606, Australia's only mammals were marsupials. They evolved into various forms resembling typical mammals on other continents, including mimics of moles (genus *Notoryctes*), flying squirrels (genus *Petaurus*), and lions (genus *Thylacoleo*). There was also a doglike marsupial, the thylacine, distinguished from canids chiefly by its pouch (in females) and a pattern of stripes on its flanks.

Despite their supposed extinction, thylacines are sighted frequently throughout Australia and Tasmania. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

Fossils indicate that seven species of thylacine once inhabited Australia and New Guinea. The largest was a wolf-sized predator whose skull closely resembled those of timber wolves, although its closest living relative is actually the Tasmanian devil. Aboriginal rock paintings depicting thylacines have been dated to 1000 B.C.E., but zoologists insist that thylacines were extinct on mainland Australia before the first Europeans arrived. Thylacines lasted longer on the island of Tasmania, where ranchers slaughtered them to keep them from devouring sheep. The last confirmed kill occurred in 1933. Authorities banned the hunting of thylacines in July 1936, but it was already too late. The last known specimen died two months later at Hobart Zoo, after negligent keepers left it exposed to foul weather.

Despite the general assumption of extinction, searches conducted in northwestern Tasmania found apparent thylacine footprints and droppings in the 1960s. Thylacines were listed as endangered in Tasmania until 1986, when the World Conservation Union formally branded them extinct. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora took a more cautious stance in 2006, listing the species as possibly extinct.

Despite that scientific pessimism, thylacine sightings continue, not only from Tasmania but from mainland Australia as well. In 1994, authors Paul Cropper and Tony Healy collected accounts of 500 sightings spanning six decades. Researchers Buck and Joan Emberg list 360 Tasmanian sightings and 269 mainland reports during the same period. The Australian Rare Fauna Research Association claims 3,800 sightings logged between 1936 and 2003. Several photographs of supposed thylacines were published between 1964 and 2006, but authorities refuse to accept them as proof that the species survives. The most recent sighting was logged from Byron Bay, Victoria, in January 2008, by an employee of Melbourne's Werribee Zoo and her husband.

In 1999, scientists at Sydney's Australian Museum announced plans to clone thylacines using DNA extracted from specimens preserved in the early 20th century. That idea raised a storm of controversy and, despite some claims of progress in 2002; it was scrapped in February 2005, with an announcement that the DNA samples were too degraded to permit successful cloning. Three months later, Prof. Michael Archer, Dean of Science at the University of New South Wales, declared plans to proceed with the cloning, but no updates are available.

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MISSING LINKS

Throughout the world, on every inhabited continent, legends speak of large, hairy wild men or cannibal giants who menaced our early ancestors. Unlike some other creatures of mythology, however, these refuse to disappear. From the beginnings of recorded history to modern times, sightings of unknown apelike creatures have continued and increased in number, often coming from locations such as North America, where humans are the only native primates and no apes can officially be found outside of zoos or laboratories. They are known by many names and come in different sizes, from the stature of a chimpanzee to 12 ft. tall or more. Their footprints range from child-size to impressions more than 20 in. long. They have been seen in every U.S. state except Hawaii, with more than 2,000 eyewitness sightings on record since 1815. According to the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization, 25 sightings came from 18 different states in 2007, and 16 from 12 states in 2008. A small but growing number of scientists—including famed primate researcher Jane Goodall—believe that large primates may remain undiscovered on earth. Here we examine some of those for whom substantial evidence exists.

ALMAS

This man-sized primate reportedly inhabits a broad Asian territory ranging from the Caucasus Mountains of Russia and the Republic of Georgia, eastward through Kazakhstan, Siberia, Mongolia, and part of China. *Almas* means "wild man" in Mongolian. Some of its other names include *almasti* ("forest man"), *adam-ayu* ("bear man"), *dev* ("demon"), *farishta* ("angel"), *golub-yavan* ("wild man"), *kaptar* (meaning unknown), and *khün görüessü* ("man-beast"). Witnesses generally describe almas as 5–6 ft. tall and covered with reddish-brown hair, except on their faces and hands. Almas' faces feature a prominent brow ridge and cheekbones, a flat nose, and jutting lower jaw. The creatures have long arms and walk with their knees slightly bent.

The long record of almas sightings includes several reports of specimens captured or killed, a circumstance that has inspired official studies by the Russian government since World War II. Famous cases include:

- 15th century: Bavarian soldier Johannes Schiltberger was captured by Mongol troops in 1402 and remained their slave until 1427. During his travels in captivity, he saw two almas caught by soldiers in the Tian Shan Mountains. Schiltberger also published one of the earliest European descriptions of Przewalski's horse, which was not scientifically classified until 1881.
- 1850: Villagers from T'khina, in the Caucasus range, allegedly captured a female specimen and taught her to perform simple domestic chores. The creature, called "Zana," also bore several children fathered by men in the village between 1878 and 1884. Zana died in 1890, but her children lived on. American anthropologist Grover Krantz examined the skull of her son, Khwit, in 1990 and pronounced it normal. DNA tests performed on one of Khwit's teeth in 2007 produced inconclusive results.
- 1906: Russian scholar Badzar Baradiin claimed an almas sighting in Mongolia's Gobi Desert. Critics note that he failed to mention the incident in his travel diary.
- 1913: Russian scientist V. A. Khaklov reportedly prepared a detailed study of almas, which was lost during the revolution of 1917–18.
- 1925: Soviet troops let by Maj. Gen. Mikhail Topilski attacked a supposed stronghold of anticommunist guerrillas in the Pamir Mountains, killing a male apelike biped 5 ft., 6 in. tall. Its face resembled "the Mongol type," but Topilski reported, "Our doctor made a long and thorough inspection of the body, and it was clear that it was not a human being."
- 1937: Dordji Meiren, from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, examined the supposed skin of an almas at a monastery in Baruun Hural, Mongolia. Lamas at the monastery used the hide as a prayer rug, telling Meiren that they received it from a local hunter named Mangal Durekchi.
- 1941: Russian troops caught a 6-ft. hairy wild man in the Caucasus and called an army doctor, Lt. Col. Vazghen Karapetian, to determine if the creature was a German spy. Dr. Karapetian pronounced the mute captive innocent. Its fate is unknown.
- 1957: While mapping glaciers in the Pamirs, Alexander Pronin, from Leningrad University's Geographical Research Institute, saw an apelike creature near the Balyandkiik River.
- 1959: Veterinarian Ranazan Omarov met a *kaptar* on a mountain trail in Dagestan. One month later, Russian anthropologists Marie-Jeanne Kauffman and Yuri Merezhinskiy saw an albino specimen bathing in a stream near Balakon, Azerbaijan. Their guide fired a shot at the creature and scared it away before they could take photographs.
- 1963: Russian physician Ivan Ivlov saw an apparent almas family, including an adult male and female with one juvenile, in the Altai Mountains of western Mongolia.
- 1980: A worker at the Bulgan agricultural station, run by the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, reported finding "a hairy corpse of a robust humanlike creature. . . . The dead thing was not a bear or ape and at the same time it was not a man."

Cryptozoologists Bernard Heuvelmans and Boris Porshnev believed that almas, by whatever name, represent a relict population of prehistoric Neanderthals (named for Germany's Neander Valley, where the first fossil remains were found in 1856). Porshnev studied the almas from the 1950s until his death in 1972, including personal examination of Zana's grandchildren, and claimed that Soviet authorities suppressed his report on that case.

Further Reading: Bayanov, D. *In the Footsteps of the Russian Snowman*. (Moscow: Crypto-Logos, 1996).

BARMANU

Residents of the Hindu Kush, a mountain range spanning the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, describe a bipedal creature known as *barmanu* ("big hairy one") or *ban-manush* ("forest man") that dwells in forests at elevations above 6,500 ft. As with almas and similar beasts, the barmanu is covered with hair except for its face, palms, and the soles of its feet. Many villagers regard the creature as half-human and half-ape, and report cases where it allegedly abducted women as mates.

Spanish zoologist Jordi Magraner began researching barmanu reports during 1988 and spent the next 14 years in Pakistan pursuing the elusive creatures. He collected testimony from 29 witnesses who claimed 31 barmanu sightings. He also personally found large humanoid footprints in Pakistan's Chitral district and heard strange nocturnal cries that his guides attributed to the barmanu. In 1994, Magraner published a report on his findings and created the Institute of Cryptozoology to carry out further research. Unknown persons murdered Magraner and a 12-year-old servant boy at Bumburet, on August 2, 2002. Pakistani police failed to identify the killers, but later spread false rumors that Magraner was a spy with dubious links to Afghanistan. Another version, never logically explained, blames his murder on Afghanistan's Taliban extremists.

Magraner believed that the barmanu were identical to *Homo pongoides*, the scientific name proposed by Bernard Heuvelmans for the Minnesota Ice Man (see below) in 1969. As described by Heuvelmans and colleague Boris Porshnev, *H. pongoides* represents a surviving population of Neanderthals scattered from Central Asia to the jungles of Laos and Vietnam. Mainstream science rejects the possibility of pre-human survivors living anywhere on earth.

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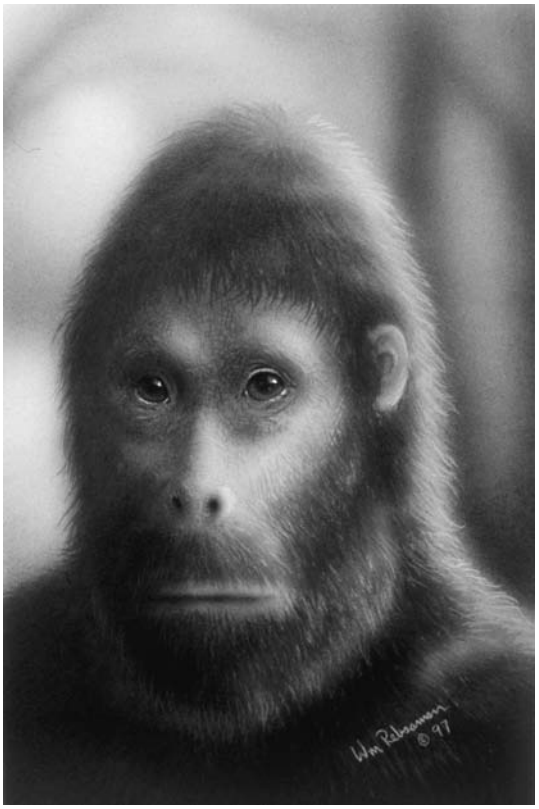
BIGFOOT

Prior to the arrival of European settlers in the 15th century, Native Americans were well acquainted with large forest- or swamp-dwelling bipeds. They decorated totem poles with carvings of the apelike creatures, calling them *atahsaia* ("cannibal demons"), *bukwas* ("wildman of the woods"), *chiye tanka* ("big elder brother"), *choanito* ("night people"), *ohmah* ("wild man"), *saskets* ("giant"), *skookum* ("evil god of the woods"), *see'atco* ("one who runs and hides"), and more than 60 other names.



Thousands of witnesses report encounters with the mystery creature known as Bigfoot. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

Frontiersman Daniel Boone claimed to have killed a large ape in Kentucky, probably during the American Revolution (1775–83), but the first contemporary media report was published by the *Times of London* on January 4, 1785, describing the capture of a 7-ft. hairy wildman near Lake of the Woods, in present-day Minnesota. Reports from Florida and New York followed in 1818, and sightings of large unknown primates have continued throughout the United States and Canada into the 21st century. Canadian reporter J. W. Burns mixed several Indian names to create the term *Sasquatch* in April 1929. Kentucky witnesses began calling the hairy creatures "Bigfoot" in the 1930s, but newspapers did not pick up that nickname until 1958, when large footprints appeared at a highway construction site in northern California.

Descriptions of the Bigfoot/Sasquatch creatures and their tracks differ so widely that some authors—including Ivan Sanderson, Mark Hall, and Loren Coleman—have proposed multiple species of unknown primates dwelling in North America and around the world. Traditional scientists deny that any such creatures exist, much less several species competing for space and food in modern America, yet the sightings of large unknown beasts and their footprints continue.

Researcher Christopher Murphy, writing in 2005, cited 2,557 eyewitness sightings of Bigfoot across North America, and the number of footprint reports is much higher—10,000 or more, by some accounts. Murphy's list includes 362 sightings from British Columbia, 343 from California, 286 from Washington, and 176 from Oregon. While it is true that most classic sightings emerge from the Pacific Northwest, every American state but Hawaii has Bigfoot encounters on record. Author Rick Berry's 1993 report on East Coast sightings lists 1,050 incidents, including 144 in Florida and a stunning 350 in Pennsylvania.

Skeptics dismiss all Bigfoot encounters as hoaxes or confused sightings of known animals such as bears. Some hoaxers have confessed to faking Bigfoot tracks—most notably Raymond Wallace (1918–2002)—but their exploits are exaggerated by professional debunkers striving to prove that no Bigfoot ever existed. Wallace, in fact, was well known to Bigfoot researchers as a fraud from 1958 onward. No one took his wild pranks seriously until his death, when journalists worldwide blindly accepted claims from his

children that Wallace "invented Bigfoot." Even minimal research would demonstrate that Wallace could not be responsible for sightings that occurred more than 130 years before his birth.

Since no Bigfoot has yet been killed or captured and delivered to a lab for study, what scientific evidence suggests that the creatures exist? A small group of open-minded scientists, led by anthropologist Dr. Jeffrey Meldrum at the University of Idaho, note the following:

- *Footprints:* While some footprints are obviously faked by pranksters using crude "feet" carved from wood, rigid models never display signs of flexure or the movement of individual toes seen in many Bigfoot tracks. Some footprint casts display apparent crippling deformities, while others clearly reveal dermal ridges—the patterns of lines found on primate hands and feet. A standing reward of $100,000, offered in 2003 for any hoaxer who can dupe a panel of experts with manufactured Bigfoot tracks, has not been claimed.
- *Hair samples:* Various Bigfoot encounters have included discovery of suspect hair. A sample submitted to California State College in 1968 failed to match hair from any known North American mammal. In 1974, Oregon microbiologist Mary Florey diagnosed another sample as "humanoid, but not human." That same year, an Idaho crime lab tested a third sample, finding that it came from "no known animal." In 1975, a report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers claimed that FBI testing of alleged Sasquatch hair "resulted in the conclusion that no such hair exists on any human or presently-known animal for which such data is available." In February 1978, Pennsylvania's *York Daily Record* announced that hair recovered from a car that supposedly struck a Bigfoot "came from a primate" but "did not compare with hair samples from over a hundred common primates." Hairs found in 1983 in Oklahoma failed to match "humans of any known animal." In 1985, hairs found on a footprint cast from Vermont produced "inconclusive" DNA results. In 1993, a California sample analyzed by the California Academy of Sciences, proved "clearly related to the human-chimpanzee-gorilla group, but [was] distinguishable from each of these." In 2002, Ohio geneticist John Lewis examined a Kentucky sample, pronouncing them "hominid," more closely related to bonobo apes than to humans. Researcher Autumn Williams collected hairs from Alabama in 2003, which belonged to an "unknown primate."
- *Audio recordings:* Many witnesses describe Bigfoot's ear-splitting cries. Tests performed on a recording made in California's Sierra Nevada mountains in October 1972 concluded that the unknown screamer must have a 10-in. larynx. A 6-ft. man typically has a larynx 6.5 in. long, suggesting that the California howler was 8 ft. tall or larger.
- *Photographs:* Many photos, films, and videotapes allegedly depict unknown primates in the wild. Some are obvious clumsy fakes, and most others are too blurry for analysis. The best example so far—952 frames of 16mm movie film taken by Roger Patterson near Willow Creek, California, on October 20, 1967—remains intensely controversial. The film apparently shows a female Sasquatch walking away from the camera, glancing back at Patterson over her right shoulder. Skeptics claim the

movie shows a man in costume, though Hollywood special-effects experts professed themselves unable to duplicate it in 1967. In their efforts to debunk the film, critics have produced two different men who claim they "wore the ape suit," but neither could describe it accurately or direct researchers to the site where the film was made. Author Mark Chorvinsky claimed that movie makeup expert John Chambers created the suit, but Chambers denied it. Another writer, Greg Long, claims costume-maker Philip Morris made the suit, but photos of Morris's work bear no resemblance to the film's subject. Meanwhile, physical anthropologists Jeffrey Meldrum and Grover Krantz subjected Patterson's film to scientific analysis, reporting that the creature's walk cannot be accurately duplicated by a man.

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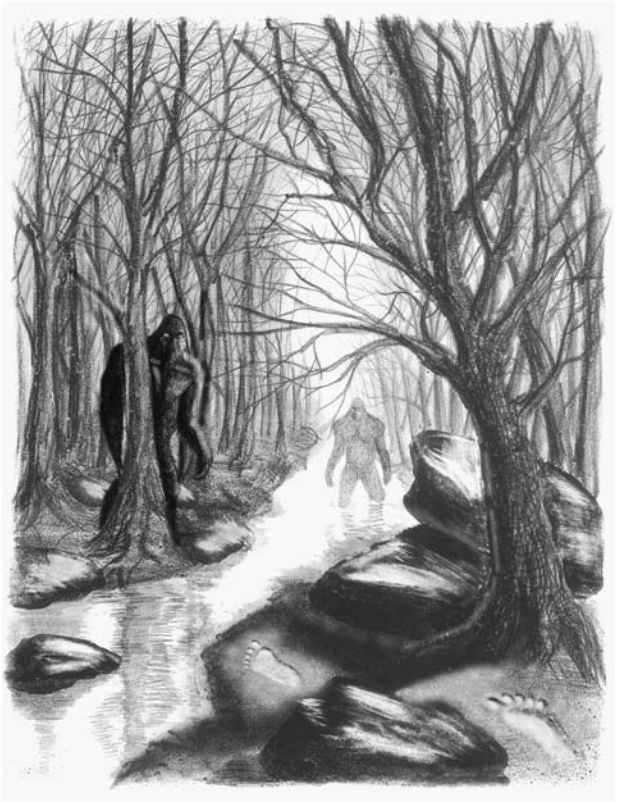
FOUKE MONSTER

Americans know this Arkansas version of Bigfoot best from a series of low-budget films including *The Legend of Boggy Creek* (1972), *Return to Boggy Creek* (1977), and *The Barbaric Beast of Boggy Creek* (1985). In fact, though, reports of the large apelike creature predate the first film by 126 years, beginning with a report in the March 1846 issue of *Scientific American*. That brief item described a "wildman" seen in swamps along the Arkansas-Missouri border, where it left 22-in. footprints with toes "as long as a common man's fingers."

Five years after that report, in June 1851, the *Memphis Inquirer* reported that a wildman of "gigantic stature" had been seen in Greene County. According to that article, the creature had "long been known traditionally" in Greene, Poinsett, and St. Francis Counties, where some locals believed it was a man driven mad by an earthquake that shook the region in December 1811. Another rash of sightings made news in early 1856, then the beast dropped from sight until June 1938, when it returned to frighten residents of Baxter County. The first sighting at Fouke, in Miller County, was not reported until 1953. It returned in 1956 to frighten young squirrel-hunter James "Smokey" Crabtree, and continued its visits through the end of the century, with 40 local sightings reported during 1997–98. In August 2003, a trail of 14-in. footprints was photographed in Miller County.

While the "Fouke Monster" label is generally applied to any unknown biped reported from Arkansas, Miller County has no monopoly on sightings. The Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization's Web site lists 65 cases from 30 counties statewide. The most recent eyewitness sighting, at the time of this writing, was logged near Bismarck, in Hot Spring County, in December 2005. Yell County residents claimed multiple incidents without an actual sighting in December 2007.

While descriptions of the Arkansas creatures are fairly consistent, generally reporting a dark-haired, 6–8 ft. tall biped that weighs 250–300 lbs., one report described a 10-ft. giant closer to 800 lbs. At least one group of footprints also deviated from the norm, displaying only three toes on each foot. Some of the Arkansas bipeds are also unusually aggressive, reportedly pursuing hunters, snatching livestock, and trying to invade rural homes. Several persons fired shots at Bigfoot without any effect, prompting Miller County Sheriff Leslie Greer to issue a rare "no guns" order in 1971. Greer also fined three people $59 each "for filing a fraudulent monster report."



The Fouke Monster is famous for its visits to Boggy Creek. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

Bobby and Elizabeth Ford found three-toed tracks outside their Jonesville home (near Fouke) in May 1971, after a violent encounter with the creature, but Dr. Frank Schambach at Southern State College observed that all known primates have five toes, telling reporters, "There is a 99-percent chance the tracks are a hoax." In spite of this statement, reports of Bigfoot tracks with two, three, four, or six toes were filed from 12 other states and two Canadian provinces between 1902 and 1997. In West Virginia, during 1978, one unknown biped left "huge round tracks" with no toes at all. Meanwhile, African researchers learned that members of Zimbabwe's Vadoma tribe—nicknamed "ostrich people"—are born with only two toes on each foot, the result of a genetic disorder handed down through countless generations.

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MINNESOTA ICEMAN

Skeptics insist that the case for Bigfoot cannot be proven without a specimen. Several reports from the 18th and 19th centuries refer to unknown primates killed or captured in America, but none are traceable today. More recently, however, some researchers claim that science had a dead Bigfoot on ice—and let it slip away.

The strange story begins in 1967, when showman Frank Hansen toured the Midwest with a refrigerated truck containing the ice-bound remains of an unknown "What-is-It." Hansen often changed his story of the creature's origin, saying that it was found by Chinese fishermen, Japanese whalers, or Russian sealers, floating in a block of natural ice in the Sea of Okhosk, then was shipped to Hong Kong and purchased by an unnamed millionaire who loaned or rented it to Hansen for a two-year sideshow tour.

In autumn 1967, a zoology student saw the hairy corpse and thought it might be genuine. Another year passed before zoologists Bernard Heuvelmans and Ivan Sanderson heard the story and called on Hansen at his Minnesota farm, on December 16, 1968. They spent two days examining the body in its block of ice, deciding that it was a male humanoid creature 6 ft. tall, covered from head to toe in dark brown hair 3–4 in. long. Its right arm was broken, with bones protruding from a gaping wound. Sanderson thought the eye sockets were hollow, while Heuvelmans said the thing's left eye was dangling on its cheek. Although they could not touch the corpse, both scientists smelled rotting flesh at one end of the freezer containing the ice where the glass cover was cracked.

Over Hansen's objections, both Heuvelmans and Sanderson published reports of their findings. Heuvelmans named the Minnesota Iceman *Homo pongoides* ("apelike man"), and Sanderson described it as an evolutionary "missing link." Hansen later claimed that the police and FBI contacted him (though the FBI denied it), seeking to learn if the Iceman was a human murder victim. To escape prosecution, Hansen says, he returned the corpse to its owner and replaced it with a rubber model. The new exhibit, advertised as "a fabricated illusion," went on tour in 1969.

Hansen confused matters further in July 1970, when he wrote a magazine article claiming that *he* killed the Iceman after it attacked him on a 1960 Minnesota hunting trip. He said a Hollywood special-effects team made the replica in January 1967 for display at fairs. In 1968, Hansen wrote, he had briefly placed the real thing on tour, then hid it again after Heuvelmans and Sanderson brought him unwelcome publicity. Three months later, in October 1970, Sanderson published another article reporting that Hansen had *five* model beasts on tour around the U.S. However, Sanderson also claimed he had traced some hairs from the original, preserved at an unnamed "university in the South," when the corpse was imported from Asia.

Sadly, Sanderson never produced the hairs and the university remains unidentified. Heuvelmans changed his opinion of *Homo pongoides* in 1974, speculating that the Iceman was a relict Neanderthal from Southeast Asia, killed by Hansen during the Vietnam War and smuggled home in a military casket. Researcher Mark Hall believes the Iceman was a specimen of *Homo erectus*, another primitive human presumed extinct for 200,000 years. Without the original corpse—if it ever existed—the riddle remains unanswered.

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MOMO

As we have seen, Bigfoot is not confined to the Pacific Northwest. It has been seen in every mainland state of the United States and is known by various local nicknames.

Momo—short for "Missouri Monster"—is the name applied to a 7-ft. hairy biped that frightened residents of the Show-Me State between 1971 and 1972. In later years, some authors also used the name for large unknown primates seen in Illinois and Indiana.

Bigfoot sightings in Missouri date from 1865, when Douglas County hunters glimpsed a wild man with purple skin whom locals dubbed the Blue Man of Spring Creek. It reappeared sporadically over the next half-century, and a posse tried to kill the beast in May 1911. The trackers found a den littered with bones and animal skins, but never saw the creature. It returned in May 1915, snatching sheep and terrorizing Douglas County farmers, then vanished again until June 1925, when it surprised a road construction crew near Alton. Another hairy biped killed sheep and goats around Pulaski County in 1947, then slaughtered a pack of hunting dogs sent to find it. When the hunters arrived, it supposedly sprang from hiding and overturned their Jeep.

Missouri's Bigfoot vanished again until July 1968, when it allegedly tried to kidnap a 4-year-old boy from a St. Louis suburb. In July 1971, it frightened a group of Pike County picnickers and received its "Momo" nickname from local newspapers. A full year later it returned to spook fishermen at Cuivre State Park and snatched a dog in Pike County. In October 1975, residents of Franklin County called their 8-ft. hairy night-prowler the "Brush Ape." It remained in the area, and scared a motorist in May 1977. Bigfoot researchers list more than 40 additional Momo sightings since 1980. The most recent as of this writing occurred in July 2006, in Andrew County, near the Missouri River bluffs which locals sometimes call the "Monkey Hills."

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MONO GRANDE

Reports of unknown primates sound more likely when they come from distant jungles, such as those of the Amazon Basin. Indeed, five new species of monkeys were discovered in Brazil between June 2002 and February 2008. None were gorilla-sized, but forest-dwelling people of South America still report encounters with a creature called *mono grande* ("large monkey") or *mono rey* ("king monkey") that remains unrecognized by science.

Like Bigfoot, the elusive creatures have been known for centuries by many names. Spanish explorer Pedro Cieza de León chronicled sightings of large apes known as *marimondas* in 1533, and Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618) also noted reports of large monkey-like creatures in South America. In 1769, Dr. Edward Bancroft described 5-ft. apes known as *didi* among native tribesmen in the region of modern Guyana and Suriname. German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt traveled through Latin America between 1799 and 1804, recording stories of hairy ape men called *salvaje* ("wild") who built huts along the Orinoco River, kidnapped women, and sometimes ate human flesh. In 1825, Baron Alexander von Humboldt reported that a large ape called *vasitri* ("big devil") had kidnapped a woman from San Carlos, Brazil. British explorer Charles Brown collected more didi reports in 1868, and a British magistrate named Haines saw two of the creatures near Rupununi, Guyana in 1910.

Sometime between 1917 and 1920, while prospecting for oil on the border between Colombia and Venezuela, members of an expedition led by Swiss geologist François de Loys met two large apes and shot one, while the other escaped. They photographed the dead ape, which de Loys claimed was 4 ft., 5 in. tall, and then preserved the skull and skin for study. Unfortunately, the specimens and all but one photo were lost. After de Loys died, a friend, George Montand, found the photo and published a description of the ape, which he called *Ameranthropoides loysi*. Critics claimed that the photo showed a common spider monkey.

Controversy still surrounds Montand's report, which called the de Loys ape a missing link and the supposed ancestor of red people found in the Western Hemisphere. Montand's view of science was clearly tainted by racism—he also believed that black Africans evolved from gorillas, and that Asians evolved from orangutans—but did he use the photo as part of a deliberate racist hoax, or was he simply ignorant? The argument continues to this day.

In either case, sightings of the mono grande did not end with the de Loys expedition. Italian explorers searched for the creature along Guyana's Marazuni River in 1931, and while they never saw it, they returned with new eyewitness reports. American scientist Phillip Herschkowitz retraced de Loys's route and concluded that the mono grande was a mythical creature, spawned by exaggerated descriptions of spider monkeys. In 1951, a Frenchman named Roger Courteville produced another photo of an unknown ape from the Río Tarra, between Colombia and Venezuela, but skeptics accused him of altering the original photo to support a hoax.

To this day, scientific interest in the mono grande persists. Cryptozoologists Bernard Heuvelmans and Charles Dewisme planned an expedition to Colombia in the early 1960s, but failed to pursue it. Pino Turolla, a Yugoslavian nobleman who devoted his life to the exploration of South America, claimed two sightings of large unknown apes in Ecuador during 1968. Turolla said that he had photographed one of the creatures, but the photo remains unpublished. Botanist Gary Samuels met a 5-ft. roaring ape in 1987 while studying fungi in the jungles of Guyana. Author Simon Chapman and two companions sought the mono grande along Bolivia's Madidi River in the 1990s, but returned empty-handed.

Despite numerous eyewitness reports, skeptics insist that the mono grande never existed. Swedish author Rolf Blomberg blames the reports on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *The Lost World,* published in 1912, but that hardly accounts for sightings in the 16th through 19th centuries. Others declare that mono grande sightings represent encounters with oversized spider monkeys. Their case—like that for the mono grande itself—remains unproved.

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ORANG PENDEK

Indonesia is the last refuge of the orangutan, one of the four great apes (family *Hominidae*), whose counterparts are chimpanzees, gorillas, and humans. Today, orangutans are an endangered species, confined in the wild to the islands of Borneo and Sumatra, but persuasive evidence suggests that they share their shrinking habitat with another large ape unrecognized by science.

Sumatran natives call it *orang pendek* ("short person") to distinguish it from the well-known *orang hutan* ("forest person"). Those who have seen the animal describe it as a hairy, ground-dwelling primate 3–5 ft. tall. Unlike normal orangutans, it is a ground-dweller and normally walks upright on two legs. It has long arms, and most alleged orang pendek footprints are apelike in form, with an opposed big toe protruding like a thumb.

Native tribesmen knew of the orang pendek for centuries before European traders first visited Indonesia in 1512. The Netherlands claimed Indonesia's islands as the Dutch East Indies in 1800, and a British diplomat on Sumatra filed the first Western report of orang pendek 18 years later. The first published report about its footprints came in 1915, and a settler named Van Herwaarden provided the best extant description in 1924. He reported that the creature had dark hair on its head, a bare brown face with pointed chin, "dark lively eyes like human eyes," and "broad nostrils but in no way clumsy." Overall, he said, "There was nothing repulsive or ugly about its face, nor was it at all apelike."

Two orang pendek corpses were allegedly found in the 1940s, and a hunter claimed to have caught one alive in 1954, but the specimen never surfaced. Researcher John MacKinnon found a trail of 5-in. footprints in remote Ulu Segama National Park in 1969, and British author Debbie Martyr found similar tracks in 1989; she sent a plaster cast of one print to the Indonesian National Parks Department, where it was lost. Martyr also claims two personal sightings of orang pendek, in 1994 and 1998.

The best evidence to date was collected in September 2001 near Mount Kerinci, Indonesia's tallest volcano, where researchers found a fresh footprint and long strands of yellow-brown hair dangling from a nearby bush. After DNA testing, Dr. Hans Brunner, at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, declared that the hairs were neither human nor a match with those of any known Indonesian mammal. Australian primatologist Colin Groves examined photos of the footprint and pronounced it "unique."

Indonesia produced another surprise in 2003, when anthropologists exploring caves on the island of Flores found fossil remains of an apparent new hominid species, which they called *Homo floresiensis* ("Flores man"). The skeletal fragments of eight individuals, and the small tools found with them, suggest a race whose largest members were less than 4 ft. tall. The media dubbed them "Hobbits," after the little people in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and some cryptozoologists surmised that the mystery of orang pendek had been solved. Testing of the remains and tools suggested that Flores man may have survived until 12,000 years ago, later than any other proto-human race. From there, it was a short step to propose that members of the race might still survive on other islands in the Indonesian archipelago—where satellite photographs revealed 1,000 previously unknown islands in February 2003.

Intense debate surrounds the Hobbits, sparked by critics who deny that *H. floresiensis* represents a new race at all. They argue that the Flores discovery represents an isolated colony of genetic freaks whose inbreeding produced gross deformity. Efforts to clarify the matter were confounded in 2005 when scientists at Jakarta's National Research Centre of Archaeology lost some of the bones and broke others, gluing them back together in unnatural arrangements. In March 2008, a paper published by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology claimed the Flores specimens were "dwarf cretins" born without thyroid glands.

Orang pendek was nearly forgotten in the Hobbit controversy. Skeptics insist that witnesses are either lying or confused by sightings of orangutans or sun bears. Believers reply

that orangutans are said to be extinct on Sumatra outside of the island's far-northern region, while most orang pendek sightings now come from Kerinci Seblat National Park, in the island's southwest quadrant. As for sun bears, they may walk upright for short distances, but never go far on two legs, and their footprints have no opposed toes. Finally, neither suspect explains the footprint or hairs found in 2003.

Further Reading: Allen, B. *Hunting the Gugu.* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

SWAMP APE

Florida's version of Bigfoot is known as the swamp ape or skunk ape (because of its often-reported foul smell). The same names are applied to unknown hairy bipeds seen in Georgia and the Carolinas, but sightings are most frequent from the Sunshine State, where witnesses have reported more than 350 swamp ape encounters since 1818. A majority of sightings come from the vast swamps of southern Florida, but reports have been filed from 48 of Florida's 67 counties.

The first swamp ape witness, at Apalachicola in 1818, compared the animal to a baboon. The next reports described a wild man living near San Pedro Bay, in Madison

Florida's swamp ape appears when least expected. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

County. The same location produced more sightings in 1900, and then swamp apes dropped out of sight until 1942, when an aggressive primate charged a moving car outside of Branford. Another sighting came from Lakeland in 1947, but then the apes took another 10-year hiatus before reappearing in Big Cypress Swamp. Five more sightings followed in the 1950s, at least 25 in the 1960s, and 166 in the 1970s, before tapering off to 38 in the 1980s. Another surge brought 73 reports in the 1990s, and sightings have been reported in the 21st century, at an average rate of five per year.

Swamp ape reports from Florida generally mirror those from other states. The creatures range from 5 to 10 ft. tall, with most around 6–7 ft. They leave humanoid footprints (though some have only three toes) and sometimes appear in family groups. Various persons claim that they have shot swamp apes or struck them with cars, but the primates always escape. Several reports allege aggressive behavior toward humans or the slaughter of pets and livestock, but those incidents—if they occurred—represent a minority of the total.

No one has claimed more swamp ape sightings than David Shealy, owner of a campground and gift shop in Ochopee who sponsors the town's annual "Skunktoberfest." According to Shealy, he has seen the apes repeatedly since 1973 and has found their tracks on several occasions, once accompanied by strands of hair that were lost before they could be analyzed. In 1998, Shealy snapped photos of a supposed swamp ape that left 4-toed footprints at his campground. A blurry videotape followed in July 2000, but skeptics accused Shealy of faking the incidents for personal profit. Shealy runs Ochopee's Skunk Ape Research Headquarters and is often seen on TV documentaries about the swamp ape.

In December 2000, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Department received an anonymous letter describing an ape sighting near Myakka two months earlier. The envelope also contained two photos that appear to show a shaggy ape peering around some bushes toward the camera. Eager believers seized upon the evidence as proof that swamp apes must exist, while skeptics claimed the photos had been faked. Author Loren Coleman traced the photos to the shop where they were developed, but the photographer remains unidentified. Noting the animal's resemblance to an orangutan, some theorists suggest that swamp apes—like the Burmese pythons that have colonized the Everglades—were once exotic pets, released by their negligent owners into the wild.

Further Reading: Newton, M. *Florida's Unexpected Wildlife*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

YEREN

China's *yeren* ("wild man"), like other unknown primates worldwide, is known by many names throughout its range. It is *xuě-rén* in Mandarin and *sūet-jùen* in Cantonese (both meaning "snowman"). Other variations include *dà-mao-rén* ("big hairy man"), *mao-rén* ("snowman"), and *rén-xiong* ("man-bear"). Witnesses describe a biped 4–10 ft. tall, with the average height around 6 ft., 6 in. Its shaggy coat of hair 1–4 in. long comes in various colors, including black (in the Yunnan province), white (Tibet), reddish-brown (Hubei province), and occasional blond or gray. Footprints range from 8–19 in. long and display a widely separated big toe.

The earliest recorded yeren sightings date from China's Zhou Dynasty (1122–256 B.C.E.) and have continued without interruption to the present. Poet Qu Yuan (348–270 B.C.E.) wrote of "mountain ogres," while historian Li Yanshow (Tang Dynasty, 618–907 C.E.) described tribes of wild men in the Hubei province. Pharmacologist Li Shizhen (1518–93) described the 10-ft. *Fei-fei* ("man-bear") of Sichuan province, and poet Yuan Mei (1716–97) reported hairy wild men in Shanxi province.

Unlike most other countries, China has devoted time and money to investigating its unknown primates and collected more than 400 eyewitness reports since the 1920s. Official yeren hunts were held in 1961, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1994, 1997, and 1998. China created an official Committee for the Search of Strange and Rare Creatures in 1994, while the China Travel Service offered $60,000 for a complete yeren specimen, $4,800 for genuine photos or videotapes of the creature, and $1,200 for authentic hair or droppings.

The various official expeditions have produced conflicting evidence. The hands and feet of a supposed yeren, obtained in 1980, came from a new species of stump-tailed macaque monkey. A hair sample tested in 1982 came from a golden monkey, but in 1988 Dr. Wenhui Bao of Shanghai announced the "analysis of hair samples allegedly taken from the wild man proves that he exists." Scientists determined that the footage of a wild man filmed in the Hubei province, in 1994, actually portrayed a deformed human. Study of alleged yeren droppings produced a report stating that "the feces could not have come from humans as we know them, nor from a carnivorous animal." More than 1,000 footprints and 100 suspect hairs have been found in Hubei alone, but the yeren remains elusive.

What is the creature that has frightened so many witnesses and dodged so many hunters for the past 3,000 years? Chinese researcher Zhou Guoxing believes two different primates may account for the reports. The smaller yeren, Zhou suggests, might be a monkey still unknown to science. The larger yeren, sometimes 10 ft. tall, may represent a relict population of *Gigantopithecus*, a huge prehistoric ape known from fossils found in China and Vietnam, presumed extinct for some 300,000 years.

Further Reading: Yuan Zhenxin and Huang Wanpo, *Wild Man: China's Yeti*. (London: Fortean Times: London, 1981).

YETI

One of earth's most famous cryptids is the yeti of the Himalayas, also known as the "Abominable Snowman." Its most common native name combines the Sherpa words *yeh* ("rocky place" or "snowy mountain") and *teh* ("animal"). Other names used for the creature in Nepal and Tibet include *chu-mung* ("mountain spirit"), *dzu-teh* ("hulking thing"), and *metoh-kangmi* ("snow man"). It was the last name that produced confusion in 1921, when transmitted by telegraph from Nepal to Calcutta, India. Henry Newman, a reporter for the *Calcutta Statesman*, misread *metoh* as *metch*, a Sherpa word meaning "horrible" or "abominable," and thus was born the legend of the Abominable Snowman.

Long before that glitch occurred, in 1832, British diplomat Brian Hodgson filed the first Western report of yeti legends from the Himalayas. Mountaineer Lawrence Waddell found yeti tracks in Sikkim, at 17,000 ft., in 1887. Botanist Henry Elwes was the first Western explorer to claim a personal sighting, in 1906. Mountain-climbers found more

Artist's conception of the Himalayan Yeti, or "Abominable Snowman." (AP photo)

tracks in 1921 and 1922, and reported another sighting in 1923. Two years later, Greek photographer N. A. Tombazi saw a yeti in the Himalayas and said, "Unquestionably, the figure in outline was exactly like a human being, walking upright and stopping occasionally to uproot or pull at some dwarf rhododendron bushes. It showed up dark against the snow and as far as I could make out, wore no clothes." Mountaineer Eric Shipton found footprints in 1936, 1937, and 1951. Another climber, Edmund Hillary, photographed yeti tracks in 1953.

Hillary's photos prompted a series of yeti hunts between 1954 and 1960 that yielded mixed results. Two British expeditions and a Swiss group found more tracks between 1954 and 1955, while a party of Argentinean climbers said a yeti killed one of their guides in 1955. Explorer John Keel tracked a howling creature through Nepalese swamps for two days in 1956. Millionaire researcher Tom Slick financed three searches, from 1957 to 1959, recording one yeti sighting and examining alleged yeti relics at the Pangboche monastery. Members of the third Slick expedition stole bones from a supposed yeti hand from Pangboche in 1959 and smuggled them out with help from American film star James Stewart. Curiously, British primatologist W. C. Osman Hill found the bones to be human, while attached bits of skin did not match those of humans or any other known

mammal. A DNA test performed in 1991 found the skin to be "near human" but otherwise unidentified.

Yeti sightings continue to the present day, yielding mixed evidence. Photos of a supposed yeti taken in 1986 actually depicted snow-covered rocks, while various yeti skins brought in by hunters belonged to known bears. Three supposed yeti scalps, found at remote Himalayan monasteries, were replicas stitched out of goatskin. A mummified leg with a 9.4-in. foot attached, found in Siberia in October 2003, produced radically conflicting scientific opinions. Experts from Siberia's Veterinary Academy and Altai Agrarian University first reported that its bones "did not belong to any known animal." Russian cryptozoologist Michael Trachtengerts contradicted that verdict, stating that the relic was "for sure the hind right leg of a bear." In January 2004, another group of Russian scientists declared that the leg "does not belong to any species of man."

The latest yeti news (as of this writing) emerged in December 2007, when photographer Josh Gates led a team to the Himalayas for an episode of the Sci-Fi Channel program *Destination Truth*. Camped out at 11,000 feet in a wooded area where yeti sightings and attacks on livestock are reported, the team found two large humanoid footprints, one clearly showing five splayed toes. Anthropologist Jeffrey Meldrum examined the footprint cast at Idaho State University, noting its strong resemblance to certain casts of Bigfoot tracks from the United States.

Skeptics insist that yeti sightings arise from hoaxes, superstition, or misidentification of creatures including bears, snow leopards, or monkeys (perhaps including some unknown to science). They explain the yeti's strange footprints as a result of melting snow, which may enlarge a normal track to many times its normal size. The problem with that argument is that snow-melt blurs or obliterates toe-marks and *shortens* the stride between footprints as they enlarge, rather than making it longer. Likewise, the snowmelt theory has no meaning with regard to tracks like the Gates print, which are found on soil without traces of snow.

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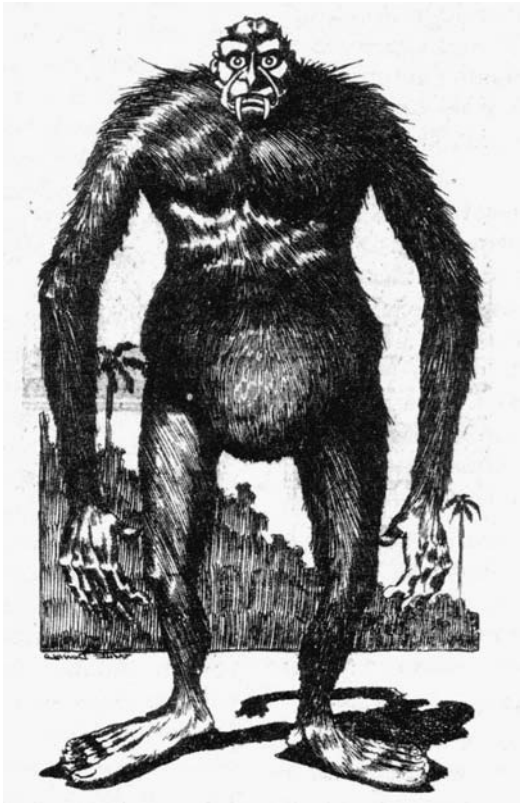
YOWIE

Australia's version of Bigfoot or yeti is known by many names throughout the continent. Aborigines call the creature *jimbra* or *jingara* in Western Australia; *dulugal*, *moomega* or *yaroma* in New South Wales; *noocoonah* in South Australia; and *quinkin* in Queensland. European pioneers called it Yahoo, after a fictional primitive race in the novel *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), but most now refer to the creatures as yowies.

Western reports of the yowie began with a hoax in 1790, when a British pamphlet described the capture of a 9-ft. Australian wild man who was supposedly shipped off to Britain. British settlers reported 35 yowie sightings in the last half of the 19th century, with the largest apelike creature said to be 12 ft. tall. Australian cryptozoologist Rex Gilroy claimed to have 3,000 yowie sightings on file by 1978, while authors Paul Cropper and Tony Healy listed a more conservative 300-plus in their definitive study of the yowie phenomenon, in 2006. Yowies generally resemble North America's Bigfoot and range in height from 3–12 ft., with an average of 6–8 ft. Some produce foul odors similar to that

of Florida's skunk ape, and many utter loud cries like those reported by witnesses to unknown primate encounters around the world. Only seven of the Cropper-Healy cases involved apparent aggression toward humans, usually chasing actions that may have been misinterpreted by fleeing witnesses.

Authors Cropper and Healy consider various possible yowie suspects, including feral humans (true wild men), an undiscovered population of orangutans, surviving specimens of the prehistoric ape *Gigantopithecus*, or relict proto-humans such as *Homo erectus*. While they reach no conclusion, we should note that, with the exception of bats and certain rodents, all native Australian mammals are marsupials or monotremes (the egg-laying echidna and platypus). Science does not recognize any marsupial apes, but primates may have reached Australia via land bridges from Southeast Asia when the Aborigines arrived, 40,000–60,000 years ago.



A 19th-century artist turned Australia's yowie into a fanged monster. (Author's collection)

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5

FROM THE DEPTHS

Approximately 71 percent of earth's surface is covered by water. The vast majority of that hydrosphere is salt water, including 5 principal oceans and 110 smaller seas. More than half of the area exceeds 9,800 ft. in depth, while the deepest point—in the Pacific Ocean's Mariana Trench—plunges to 6.8 mi. Moving inland, mapmakers recognize 304 million bodies of standing fresh water. Most are relatively small, but 122 lakes exceed 386 square miles in area. The 13 deepest lakes on earth range from 1,150 ft. to 5,369 ft. in depth. No tally exists for earth's rivers, but 163 of the longest range from 620 to 4,135 miles in length. Throughout recorded history, sailors have reported sightings of large unknown creatures at sea, inscribing their maps with notations that read "Here Be Monsters." Today, some of those beasts are recognized as whales and giant squids, but others—the elusive sea serpents of legend—defy easy identification. Likewise, sightings of freshwater monsters emanate from some 900 lakes and rivers worldwide. Some cases are explained by hoaxes or encounters with large fish such as sturgeon or giant catfish, but others remain unexplained.

BESSIE

Lake Erie is the southernmost of North America's Great Lakes. Although ranked as the 10th-largest lake on earth, with a surface area of 9,940 square miles, neighboring Lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior dwarf it. It is also the shallowest of the Great Lakes, with a maximum depth of 210 ft., but it maintains the most persistent history of cryptid sightings in the area.

Reports of Lake Erie's cryptid—nicknamed "Bessie" or "South Bay Bessie" by locals—date from 1793. In 1881, two fisherman claimed they had caught a 25-ft. sea serpent at Sandusky Bay, Ohio, but the incident proved to be a hoax. Six years later, another fishing party saw a glowing creature 30–40 ft. long, beached on the shore near Toledo, but it escaped when they ran home for ropes to secure it.

In July 1892, Captain Jenkins of the steamship *Fenton* saw what he thought was an abandoned ship afloat on Lake Erie. Drawing closer, he discovered that the object was a serpent 30 ft. or more in length. As Jenkins described it to the *Chicago Sunday Tribune:*

> The tail of the monster was laterally compressed thus adapting it to the same purpose in locomotion through the water as the caudal fin in fishes. The head was nearly a foot in length, the nostrils being placed not as in ordinary serpents at the end of the snout, but above and the eyes, blazing like two balls of fire, were about two and a half inches in diameter. The neck was very short and thick set and the mouth, turned upward instead of downward, was of huge cavernous dimensions when the animal opened its jaws so as to display its forked tongue. The color was black with yellowish-white bands on the body and white patches upon the head.

According to Capt. Jenkins, the beast chased his vessel for 20 miles, pausing at times to raise its head 15 ft. above the water's surface, but then tired of the game and submerged.

A century later, in the summer of 1990, multiple witnesses saw Bessie swimming along the Ohio shoreline of Lake Erie. Most described it as 40–50 ft. long, while Mary Landoll said its head was "twice the size of a football." Others noted two small horns atop that head. Tom Solberg, owner of a local marina, offered $150,000 for Bessie's capture alive and unharmed, stipulating that the creature must be 30 ft. or longer, weigh at least 1,000 lbs., and represent a new species. The holding pen that Solberg built for Bessie remains empty today.

Catching the beast might prove dangerous. Claims that Bessie capsized a sailboat in 1992, killing three persons aboard, were traced to the tabloid *Weekly World News* (which included faked aerial photos of the attack), but a verified incident from August 2003 suggests the presence of a large unidentified predator in Lake Erie. In that case, three swimmers at Port Dover, Ontario suffered 6-in. bite marks on their legs, inflicted by some creature that escaped, unseen. Physicians at a local hospital described the bites as resembling the work of a "big, honking fish," but zoologists at Toronto University could not identify the animal from photos of the wounds. Skeptics suggest that Bessie is a sturgeon, whose North American species may reach 22 ft. in length.

Further Reading: Kirk, J. *In the Domain of the Lake Monsters*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 1998), pp. 144–48.

CADBOROSAURUS

Aboriginal art from British Columbia proves that early tribesmen recognized sea serpents in their coastal waters, variously known as *Hiyitl'iik, Numske* and *T'chain-ko*. The first sighting by European witnesses, aboard the ship *Columbia,* was logged in 1791. Researchers Edward Bousfield and Paul Leblond list 178 sightings between summer 1881 and June 1994, involving creatures that were "unambiguously alive and clearly not a known animal, because of its appearance or dimensions." More than half of those cases involved multiple witnesses, including a report from Bellingham Bay, where 17 persons saw the creature on October 26, 1895.

Cadborosaurus (or "Caddy") received its name from Archie Wills, editor of the *Victoria Daily Times,* after a series of 1933 sightings at Cadboro Bay. Other names applied over the

"Caddy" is the Pacific Northwest's most famous sea monster. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

past two centuries include Edizgiganteus (for Washington's Ediz Hook lighthouse), Klahmahsaurus (around Texada Island, B.C.), Penda (for Pender Island), the Sea Hag, and the Serpent of Second Narrows (between Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia). As with its names, descriptions vary widely, from 8 to 300 ft. in length. Many reports describe a long neck with a mane, a humped back or coils, and a head resembling that of a camel or horse. Some accounts include large eyes, whiskers, fins, and a serrated ridge along the creature's spine. Frequent reports of hair and vertical undulations suggest that, despite its reptilian name, Cadborosaurus must be a mammal.

While most sea monster sightings include no physical proof, Caddy is remarkable for a dozen cases of alleged strandings or captures between 1930 and 1991. Most of the carcasses found on various beaches, from Alaska's Glacier Island in 1930 to Washington's Whidbey Island in 1963, were identified as decomposing whales or sharks, but certain tantalizing mysteries remain. A serpentine creature beached at Camp Fircom, B.C., in October 1936, was photographed and the photos were reproduced on postcards, but it remains unidentified today. Nine months later, a 10-ft. carcass was pulled from a sperm whale's stomach at Naden Harbor and photographed. Once again, it defied classification.

Aside from strandings, baby specimens of Cadborosaurus have supposedly been caught alive on two occasions. William Hagelund claimed the first capture of an 18-in. creature near De Courcy Island, in the Northumberland Channel, during August 1968. He kept it in a bucket of seawater, sketched it, then returned it to the sea, but did not report the incident until 1987. Four years after Hagelund's memoirs were published, in July 1991, Phyllis Harsh allegedly found a baby dinosaur beached near her home on Johns Island, in the San Juan Archipelago between Washington and British Columbia. The 2-ft. animal was still alive, and Harsh put it back in the water. She also claimed an adult Caddy sighting (in 1990) and the discovery of a small dinosaur skeleton near a bald eagle's nest on Johns Island, but did not preserve the bones.

Despite its mammalian features—mane, whiskers, and vertically mobile spine—authors Bousfield and Leblond surmise that Caddy ranks most closely with such prehistoric reptiles as the *Plesiosaurs* or *Thalattosuchians* (early marine crocodiles), both presumed extinct since the Cretaceous period, 65 million years ago. Cryptozoologists Roy Mackal and Karl Shuker suggest that Caddy may be a relict *Basilosaurus*, an early form of whale that averaged 60 ft. in length, officially extinct for 37 million years. Skeptics insist that most sightings involve known whales or elephant seals (with a record size of 22.5 ft. and 11,000 lbs.).

Further Reading: Leblond, P. and Bousfield, E. *Cadborosaurus: Survivor From the Deep*. (Victoria: Horsdal & Schubart, 1995).

CHAMP

North America's earliest lake monster reports come from Lake Champlain on the New York-Vermont border and extending into Québec, Canada. The lake is 110 miles long and 12 miles across at its widest point, for a surface area of 435 square miles. Its average depth of 64 ft. plunges to 403 ft. at the deepest point.

Native tribesmen knew the lake's resident cryptid long before French explorer Samuel de Champlain discovered the body of water that bears his name in July 1609. Some accounts claim that Champlain himself saw a great monster swimming in the lake, while other historians dismiss the supposed journal entries as forgeries. Champlain *did* see a 5-ft. creature known to Iroquois natives as *chousarou*, still unidentified today, but ichthyologists believe it was a sturgeon or a longnose gar.

Whether Champlain saw the monster or not, other European settlers soon made Champ's acquaintance. Witness Abel Horsmer saw a dragon swimming near Crown Point, New York in September 1760, while residents of West Port named the nearby harbor Big Snake Bay. A ship's captain named Crum logged the first official sighting at Bulwagga Bay, New York in July 1819. He described the creature as 187 ft. long and swimming with its head raised 15 ft. above the lake's surface.

Another 315 sightings were recorded by November 1992, describing animals that ranged from 10–75 ft. long, dark-colored, often swimming with an upraised head trailed by vertical humps or coils. At least 219 reports involved multiple witnesses, including one event where 62 persons saw the beast on July 28, 1984. As with Scotland's Nessie (see later in this section), several sightings between 1886 and 1992 describe large cryptids seen on shore beside the lake.

Showman P. T. Barnum offered a $50,000 reward for Champ's capture in 1873 and repeated the bid (reduced to $20,000) in 1887. Neither reward was claimed, but two alleged

captures of baby lake monsters were reported in the 20th century. Author Marjorie Porter, writing in 1970, quoted a supposed 1945 newspaper headline—"Baby Sea Serpent Taken in Vermont Waters"—but she provided no further details or sources. Later in the 1970s, Dennis Hall allegedly caught a strange 12-in. reptile in a marsh near Lake Champlain and shipped it to the University of Vermont, where rumors claim that zoologists deemed it "unlike any living reptile" known to science. They lost the specimen without taking photos, but Hall subsequently compared it to drawings of *Tanystropheus*, a 20-ft. marine reptile presumed extinct for some 200 million years.

Witness Sandra Mansi snapped a remarkable photo of Champ near St. Albans, Vermont, on July 5, 1977, but kept it secret until June 1981, when it was published in the *New York Times*. A year before that publication, Mansi submitted the photo to experts at the Smithsonian Institution's Department of Vertebrate Zoology. Dr. George Zug spoke for the panel in July 1980, stating that while he could offer "no unequivocal identification" of the creature; "certainly all our examinations cast no doubt on the authenticity of [the] photograph and report." In April 1981, the University of Arizona's Optical Sciences Center reported that Mansi's photo "appears to be a valid print . . . . of a real object somewhere out on a fairly large body of water." Author Benjamin Radford claims that Mansi's photo depicts a floating log, basing his "analysis" on self-drawn sketches of a tree with twisted roots which no one has discovered to this day.

Dennis Hall recaptured headlines at Lake Champlain in July 2000, when he allegedly caught two long-necked creatures on a 45-min. videotape. Hall claims to have five other tapes of Champ taken between October 2000 and June 2003, but none have been subjected to scientific analysis. Hall named the creature *Champtanystropheus*, but no mainstream zoologists accepted the classification. In June 2007, author Loren Coleman reported that Hall had vanished under mysterious circumstances, leaving friends baffled and worried. Ten months later, an anonymous email claimed that "Dennis Hall is not missing, he has simply been doing other things." No further word was forthcoming.

As at Loch Ness, sonar technology suggests the presence of one or more sizeable cryptids in Lake Champlain. Researcher Joseph Zarzynski scored a sonar hit in June 1979, at New York's Whallon Bay, where readings portrayed a large single object traveling at a depth of 175 ft. In May 1982, Raymond Sargent saw Champ on the surface, followed by a sonar reading after the creature submerged. In June 2003, a team from the Discovery Channel made multiple sonar recordings at Button Bay, Vermont, which were analyzed by Fauna Communications Research in North Carolina. Team spokesperson Elizabeth von Muggenthaler told reporters: "What we got was a biological creature creating biosonar at a level that only a few underwater species can do." Those recordings measured 10 times louder than any known species of fish found in Lake Champlain, while their irregular sequence ruled out mechanical devices such as fish finders.

Further Reading: Mangiacopra, G. and D. Smith, *Does Champ Exist?* (Landisville, PA: Coachwhip, 2007).

CHESSIE

Sea monster reports from Chesapeake Bay and nearby rivers date from the mid-19th century and have continued into modern times. One of the first sightings, logged in July 1840, described a 12-ft. creature resembling a giant turtle seen swimming near North Point,

Maryland. At least 77 other reports were filed by 1884, most describing a dark-colored serpentine animal 12–35 ft. long.

Modern Chessie sightings include a 1963 report from a U.S. Army helicopter pilot who saw a large unidentified animal swimming in the Bush River, near the Aberdeen Proving Grounds. Two years later, Pam Peters logged a sighting from the South River, near Annapolis, Maryland. A reporter for the *Richmond Times Dispatch* coined Chessie's nickname—after Nessie, of Loch Ness—in 1977, when witness Gregg Hupka snapped a photo of the creature near the mouth of the Potomac River.

Sightings multiplied in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Robert Frew produced the first Chessie videotape at Kent Island on May 31, 1982. Experts from the Smithsonian Institution and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources examined the tape three months later, and while their verdict was inconclusive, Dr. George Zug, the Smithsonian's curator of reptiles and amphibians, told journalists, "All viewers of the tape came away with a strong impression of an animate object. . . . These sightings are not isolated phenomena, for they have been reported regularly for the past several years."

In September 1985, two fishermen trolling near Hampton Roads reported their 20-minute sighting of a long-necked creature with "a short, horse-like head." Its neck rose 8 ft. above the water's surface, followed by a greenish-yellow back speckled with barnacles, and "large diamond-shaped fins on the front, stroking frantically." The beast snagged one of their fishing lines, then snapped it easily as it submerged. After that sighting, members of Maryland's state senate introduced a resolution to encourage scientific study of Chessie, but lawmakers unwilling to accept the creature's possible existence defeated the measure. Despite that vote, Chessie continues to appear sporadically, without regard to politics.

Further Reading: Frizzell, M. "The Chesapeake Bay Serpent." *Crypto Dracontology Special* 1 (November 2000): 129–37.

GIANT JELLYFISH

Jellyfish are aquatic invertebrates belonging to the class *Scyphoza* of the phylum *Cnidaria*. Most adult specimens have bell-shaped bodies equipped with stinging tentacles used to capture prey. They are found in every ocean, with various species ranging in size from microscopic to nearly 8 ft. in diameter.

The largest recognized species of jellyfish is the lion's mane, commonly found in the cold northern waters of the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans, with occasional reports from seas around Australia and New Zealand. The record specimen, washed ashore at Massachusetts Bay in 1870, had a bell 7 ft., 6 in. in diameter and tentacles 120 ft. long. A slightly smaller species, Nomura's jellyfish, inhabits Japanese waters. Its crimson bell may measure 7 ft. across, and, coupled with its record weight of 440 lbs., has earned this jelly the nickname "Big Red." Both species may inflict painful stings that are sometimes fatal to humans.

While a swimmer might be startled—even terrified—to meet an 8-ft. jellyfish at sea, some eyewitness reports suggest that Big Red and the lion's mane are midgets when compared with some species still unrecognized by science. The first modern report of a truly huge jellyfish come from British author Eric Russell in his 1957 book *Great World Mys-*

teries. According to Russell, an unnamed diver was following a shark in South Pacific waters when a massive, pulsating creature rose from the depths, enveloped the shark and subdued it, and then sank back out of sight. While ichthyologists suggested he had seen an octopus, the diver insisted that the brownish-colored beast was flat with "ragged edges," and possessed no eyes or tentacles.

In November 1969, scuba divers Pat Boatwright and Richard Winer encountered a monstrous animal at a depth of 100–150 ft. in the Atlantic Ocean, 14 miles southwest of Bermuda. They described the jellyfish's bell as purple, with a pink outer rim measuring 50–100 ft. across. Boatwright and Winer watched it for several minutes and then swiftly returned to their boat when the creature began rising toward them.

A more frightening report was logged from the Pacific in January 1973. The cargo ship *Kuranda* was en route to Fiji from Australia, plowing through stormy seas, when its bow dipped and collided with an object below the surface. When the ship rose again, the crewmen saw a huge jellyfish draped across the bow and deck, its tentacles flailing in all directions. Captain Langley Smith estimated that the jellyfish weighed some 20 tons—one-seventh the weight of his fully-loaded ship—and that its tentacles were 200 feet long. Crewmen attacked the monster, trying to dislodge it, then retreated after one man received fatal stings. An SOS radio message brought the salvage ship *Hercules* to help the *Kuranda*. The *Hercules* crew blasted the jellyfish with high-pressure steam hoses until it released the *Kuranda* and fled. Fragments of the slimy beast, later examined in Sydney, were tentatively identified as tissue from a lion's mane jellyfish.

In 1989, French police arrested fisherman Henri Baiselle on charges of killing his wife and children, but Baiselle presented a unique defense. He claimed that a jellyfish the size of a car attacked and ate his family while they were swimming in the ocean near Bourdeaux. Detectives were naturally skeptical, but Baiselle took a polygraph test that indicated his story was true. The case remains officially unsolved.

Further Reading: Shuker, K. "Giant Jellyfish." In *Mysteries and Monsters of the Sea,* (New York: Gramercy, 1998), pp. 124–30.

GLOBSTERS

Author Ivan Sanderson coined the term "globster" in 1962 to describe various rotting carcasses and masses of organic tissue that have washed ashore on beaches around the world. Often described as the remains of sea monsters, some modern globsters have been identified through DNA testing as the decomposed remains of sharks, whales, giant squid, and other marine creatures known to science. Other cases, however, remain unexplained or disputed.

Dozens of globster reports have been filed since 1648, when a still-unidentified carcass washed ashore at Santa Maria del Mar, in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. The most famous include:

- The Stronsay Beast, beached on Stronsay Island in the Orkneys, north of Scotland, in September 1808. Published reports describe it as 54–55 ft. long and 10 ft. in circumference, with a small head mounted on a neck 10–15 ft. long and sporting a mane of 14-in. hair. It appeared to have three pairs of flippers, each with 5 or 6 digits. Skeptics explain it as the decomposed remains of a basking shark, which may reach

40 ft. in length. When badly decomposed, sharks sometimes take on the appearance of a long-necked creature, and the beast's third pair of flippers may have been the claspers used by male sharks during mating.

- New River Inlet carcass: In August 1885, the president of the American Humane Society and various companions examined the carcass of a large creature at New River Inlet, Florida (St. Lucie County). Witnesses described the animal as 42 ft. long and 6 ft. in diameter, with two "flippers or fore-limbs" and an apparent long, slender neck. A storm washed the beast back to sea, leaving modern skeptics to presume it was another basking shark.
- St. Augustine carcass: See *Octopus giganteus* below.
- "Trunko": On November 1, 1922, farmer Hugh Ballance witnessed a bizarre event off the coast of Margate, South Africa. Using binoculars, he "saw what I took to be two whales fighting with some sea monster . . . [which] I took to be a polar bear, but of truly mammoth proportions. The creature I observed to rear out of the water fully 20 feet and to strike repeatedly with that I took to be its tail at the two whales." Unharmed, the whales killed their adversary, and its carcass washed ashore that night. It measured 47 ft. long, 10 ft. wide, and 5 ft. high, with a 10-ft. tail. "Where the head should have been," Ballance said, "the creature had a sort of trunk 14 inches in diameter and about five feet long, the end being like the snout of a pig." It was covered by 8-in. hair "exactly like a polar bear's and snow white." It lay on the beach for 10 days, and then was washed back to sea by the tide.
- Dunk Island carcass: In 1948 Australian boatmen found strange remains on Dunk Island, near the Great Barrier Reef. They described it as resembling a giant jellyfish, but with tough, hairy hide displaying numerous slits. Long-distance experts claimed the carcass was a deformed whale embryo. Attempts to burn it failed, whereupon it was left to the tides.
- Gulf of Alaska carcass: At 100 ft. long and 15 ft. thick, this globster—beached in July 1956—ranks as the largest on record. Its head measured 5 ft., 6 in. across, with 9-in. eye sockets set 42 in. apart. Its teeth were 6 in. long and 5 in. wide at their base. The creature's crimson flesh displayed a coat of 2-in. auburn hair. Skeptics assume it was a whale, although the largest known species—the blue whale, with a record length of 109 ft., 3.5 in.—has no teeth as described from the carcass. A sperm whale's teeth resemble those of the unknown beast, but the largest specimen on record measured 67 ft., 10 in.
- Tasmanian carcass: The object that prompted Sanderson to coin the term globster, beached itself in August 1960. It measured 18 by 20 ft., with an estimated weight of 5–10 tons. Visible features included a spine, six flabby arms, two "soft, tusk-like protuberances," and a coat of stiff white bristles. No samples were preserved, yet some authors today maintain it was a mass of adipose tissue (fat) from a whale.
- Hamai beast: Caught in August 1963 by river-dwelling villagers near Hamai, China, and witnessed by officers aboard a passing ship, the *Beaver.* Captain Boyle of the *Beaver* described it as 81 ft. long and purchased the creature's "snake-like head," already mutilated by removal of the lower jaw. Boyle lost the head without submitting it for scientific study, but described the eyes as "hog-like," while the mouth contained

three rows of "uniform and movable" teeth. Its blue skin was 1.5 in. thick and crusted in places with barnacles. While no part of the carcass survives today, various authors speculate that it may have been a decomposed basking shark (which rarely grow to 40 ft.) or a rorqual whale.

- Muriwai carcass: Washed ashore on New Zealand's North Island in 1968, described as 30 ft. long and 8 ft. high. Only photos remain of the shapeless mass, but most authors assume it was a whale.
- Tecoluta carcass: A confusing case from Mexico, dating from March 1969. One report describes a 35-ton armored carcass with a protruding tusk, which seven unnamed scientists allegedly identified as a fin whale. A contradictory account, describing a 30-ft. carcass weighing only one ton, includes a photo of a head bearing no resemblance to a whale's. The mystery remains unsolved.
- "Gambo": Witness Owen Burnham found this carcass beached at Kotu, Gambia (from which Dr. Karl Shuker coined its nickname) on June 12, 1983. It was intact, measuring 15 ft. long and 5 ft. wide, with smooth skin bearing neither fur nor scales, brown on top and white below. It had brown eyes, 18-in. jaws with nostrils at the tip, and a mouth filled with 80 conical teeth. The body had no dorsal fin, but did have four paddle-shaped flippers, each 18 in. long. The 5-ft. pointed tail possessed no flukes. Some cryptozoologists suggest it was a prehistoric reptile, while others claim Gambo was a relict primitive whale called *basilosaurus*, presumed extinct for 37 million years. However, fossil remains indicate that basilosaurus had only 40 teeth. The remains were not preserved.
- Bermuda Blob: Found at Mangrove Bay, Bermuda, in May 1988 and described as 3 ft. thick, "very white and fibrous . . . with five 'arms or legs,' rather like a disfigured star." Analysis of tissue samples in 1995 identified the carcass as a shark.
- Benbecula Carcass: Washed ashore on Benbecula Island in the Outer Hebrides, west of Scotland, in 1990. Witness Louise Whitts said the carcass "had what appeared to be a head at one end, a curved back and seemed to be covered with eaten-away flesh or even a furry skin and was 12 ft. long [and] it had all these shapes like fins along its back." No samples were preserved and the carcass remains unidentified.
- Four Mile Carcass: Beached at Four Mile Beach, Tasmania in 1997. The blob measured 15 ft. long, 6 ft. wide, and weighed an estimated 4 tons. Witnesses described white hair, paddle-shaped flippers, and six "fleshy lobes" along its sides. No samples were taken, but various authors insist it was part of a whale.
- Monster of Los Muermos: A 13-ton globster beached at Los Muermos, Chile in July 2003. This globster made global headlines when biologists initially described it as a giant octopus unknown to science. DNA testing performed in June 2004 identified it as adipose tissue from a sperm whale.

Further Reading: Sanderson, I. "Globsters." In *"Things,"* (New York: Pyramid, 1967), pp. 11–21.

ILLIE

Iliamna Lake is located in southwest Alaska, 150 miles from Anchorage. It is 75 miles long and 22 miles wide, with a surface area of 1,000 square miles; it is Alaska's largest lake.

In addition to salmon, grayling, and rainbow trout (some of which exceed 28 in.), Iliamna Lake is one of only two lakes on earth with a population of freshwater seals (the other is Lake Baikal, Siberia). If eyewitness reports are accurate, the lake also harbors something much more unusual.

Long before explorer Vitus Bering discovered Alaska and claimed it for Russia in 1741, Inuit natives recognized giant creatures called *jig-ik-nak* inhabiting Iliamna Lake. The beasts sometimes attacked boats, strangely preferring those with red hulls. The United States bought Alaska from Russia in 1867 and was rewarded by discovery of gold in the 1890s, but the cryptids of Iliamna Lake were generally ignored until September 1942, when witnesses Babe Alsworth and Bill Hammersley flew over the lake in an airplane and saw a school of gray, blunt-headed animals swimming on the surface. The creatures appeared to be 20 ft. long and swam like fish, sweeping their tails from side to side (rather than vertically, like whales).

In 1947, surveyor Lawrence Rost saw a fish more than 20 ft. long, "the color of dull aluminum," swimming in Iliamna Lake. Ten years later, millionaire adventurer Tom Slick went looking for the animals—now nicknamed Illie, after Nessie of Loch Ness—but failed to locate them. NASA astronauts on training flights around the lake reported further Illie sightings in the 1960s, while a biologist employed by Alaska's Department of Fish and Game saw a lone specimen from the air in 1963. He said it was 25–30 ft. long and swam submerged for 10 minutes without surfacing for air.

In 1977, pilot Tim LaPorte and two of his passengers saw Illie in Pedro Bay, at the northwest end of the lake. The creature was 12–14 ft. long and submerged as they passed overhead, showing vertical tailfins. Eight years later, witness George Wilson described an

Witnesses claim that Iliamna Lake harbors a species of giant fish. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

unknown creature with a 3-ft. dorsal fin swimming in the Kvichak River, at the southern end of Iliamna Lake, but his is the only report including a dorsal fin.

Another sighting occurred in July 1987, when several witnesses saw a 10-ft.-long black fish leaping from the water five miles northwest of Pedro Bay. Verna Kolyaha was fishing from a skiff when the whale-shaped creature "made an almost complete circle around us." Pilot Jerry Blandford went hunting the creature, accompanied by passenger Jerry Pippen, but did not sight it until the next day. Pippen described the creature as "a really huge seal . . . squirting water six or eight feet in the air." In fact, seals do not spout water as cetaceans do, prompting author Matthew Bille to suggest that Blandford and Pippen actually saw a stray beluga whale.

Bille may be correct about the creature seen in 1987, but whales do not possess vertical tailfins, nor do they swim by means of horizontal body movements, like the creatures described from Iliamna Lake between 1942 and 1977. Those discrepancies prompt some cryptozoologists to suggest that the lake may harbor a species of large fish unknown to science.

Further Reading: Bille, M. "What Lies beneath Lake Iliamna?" *Crypto Dracontology Special* 1 (November 2001): 66–69.

KRAKEN

In Norse mythology, the kraken was a sea monster inhabiting the coastal waters of Iceland and Norway. Its name derived from the Scandinavian *krake*, or "unhealthy animal." Danish author and bishop Erik Pontoppidan (1698–1764) described the kraken as an animal "the size of a floating island," which seized ships with its tentacles and dragged them under water. French zoologist Pierre Dénys de Montfort took the first step toward scientific recognition of the kraken in 1802, when he described two species of giant octopus. The kraken octopus, he said, inhabited the North Atlantic, while the larger colossal octopus lived off the western coast of Africa. Another half-century passed before scientists formally identified the giant squid (*Architeuthis*) in 1857.

A total of 592 giant squid specimens were collected between 1545 and 2006, including 306 from the Atlantic Ocean, 264 from the Pacific, 20 from the Indian Ocean, and two from the Mediterranean Sea. Six more specimens were reportedly collected during summer 2007—four from the Pacific and one each from the Atlantic and Mediterranean—but details on those squids are incomplete. With rare exceptions, all specimens were found dead, either washed up on beaches or snared in fishing nets. Japanese researchers took the first photos of a living giant squid at sea in September 2004 and published them a year later. In December 2006, another adult specimen was videotaped near the Ogasawara Islands, 620 miles south of Tokyo.

Despite that seeming wealth of evidence, confusion still surrounds scientific discussion of the giant squid. Some authors insist that there are nine different species of *Architeuthis*, while others claim that only one or two species exist. The most heated debate, however, concerns the maximum size of adult giant squids.

Based on examination of 105 specimens and various beaks recovered from sperm whale stomachs, we know that giant squids attain a mantle (dorsal body wall surrounding the internal organs) length exceeding 7.4 ft. in length. The head and eight arms may top 16 ft.,

while the addition of the squid's two longer tentacles gives it a documented length of 43 ft. for females and 33 ft. for males. Meanwhile, 55-ft. specimens found beached in Newfoundland (1878) and New Zealand (1880), a 52-footer from Newfoundland (1872), a 47-footer from the Bahamas (1958), 46-footers from Newfoundland (1872) and Norway (1871), a 45-footer from Newfoundland (1871), plus two 44-footers from New Zealand (1873, 1877) suggest that the records are sometimes broken.

Other evidence, hotly disputed by skeptics, suggests much larger squids. Pierre Dénys de Montfort recorded a British whaler's description of a 35-ft. arm 6 in. thick at its severed base. Another whaling captain described an arm 45 ft. long, 7 ft., 6 in. in circumference, with suckers the size of dinner plates. An 1892 report filed by agents of the Hudson Bay Co. refers to a squid's arm 98 ft. long, with suckers "as big as a basin plate, to saucer-size at the ends." Needless to say, mainstream zoologists deny the existence of any such titanic monsters at sea.

Further confusion surrounds two other species, known respectively as the colossal squid and the Humboldt squid. The colossal squid, said to live primarily in Antarctic waters, was discovered in 1925, with recovery of two tentacles from a sperm whale's stomach. Russian fishermen caught a 13-ft. immature female specimen in 1981, while a adolescent female measuring 20 ft., with an 8-ft. mantle was found floating at sea in 2003. The largest specimen on record, measuring 33 ft. and weighing 1,091 lbs., was caught by New Zealand fishermen in February 2007. In April 2008, biologists at the Museum of New Zealand in Wellington announced their belief that colossal squid may grow to be "considerably larger" than the 33-ft. specimen. They based their conclusion on squid beaks measuring 2 in. long retrieved from the stomachs of sperm whales. At press time for this book, published estimates granted the colossal squid an adult length of 40–46 ft.

The Humboldt squid, named for the Eastern Pacific's Humboldt Current, where it thrives in swarms of 1,200 or more individuals, is not officially known to exceed 7 ft. in length or 100 lbs. in weight, but are these estimates correct? In November 2007 the History Channel's *MonsterQuest* program sent researchers to Baja California to investigate claims that giant squids rose from the depths to feed on smaller Humboldt squids. To prove their case, they caught a 5-ft. Humboldt specimen, attached an underwater camera to its body, and released it. The squid dived to a depth of 1,000 ft., where the camera caught a huge squid rising from the darkness to attack it. The film segment was brief, but calculations based on the known size of the Humboldt squid used for bait produced estimates of a squid 60 ft. long. Unfortunately, from the head-on view, researchers could not tell if the giant specimen filmed was an *Architeuthis* 30 ft. beyond its normal size or a massive Humboldt squid 10-times normal.

The mystery endures.

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MEMPHRÉ

Lake Memphrémagog spans the border between Vermont and Québec, Canada. It is 27 miles long, with 73 percent of its surface area in Canada, but 75 percent of its watershed (drainage basin) lies on the American side. Its name derives from the Algonquian language, meaning "where there is a big expanse of water." Like Lake Champlain, 40 miles to the west, Lake Memphrémagog hides a secret.

Recorded sightings of the lake's resident cryptid, nicknamed "Memphré," date from 1816, when Ralph Merry and his wife saw a creature the color of a skinned sheep, having "12 to 15 pairs of legs." In 1850, author Norman Bingham published a poem describing a sea serpent patrolling the lake, devouring humans. Four years later, witness Henry Wadleigh saw an animal resembling a log or capsized boat lifting its 2-ft.-wide head above the lake's surface. In 1891, William Watt described a beast 25–30 ft. long swimming across the lake with its head raised 3 ft. above the water.

The next reported sighting, by a local doctor and two friends, occurred in October 1929. The witnesses saw Memphré on shore and showed its tracks to others, comparing the animal to an oversized alligator. In 1933, passengers aboard a cruise ship saw an "elongated snake-like fish measuring over 50 ft. in length and almost 10 ft. wide," swimming along the surface with an undulating motion. In 1935, while searching for the body of a drowning victim, diver Max Leubker claimed sightings of several unidentified eels "6–8 ft. long and as thick as a man's thigh." In 1939, a 30-ft. creature resembling a dark-skinned eel frightened five swimmers out of Lake Memphrémagog.

Memphré took another vacation after those sightings, reappearing with a new look in 1972. Witnesses in that case described it as 50 ft. long, with a long neck, cowlike head, and large, red eyes. Four years later, residents of Fitchbay, Québec saw a beast resembling "a seal with a long neck." Witness Barbara Malloy, who reported nine separate sightings, and who later claimed to "own" the name Memphré, snapped a photo of the creature while boating with her family on August 12, 1983. Sightings continued, with reports of a 16-ft. beast near Les Troi Soeurs Island in August 1997 and a 75-ft. animal with a horse-like head at Sergeant's Bay on June 4, 2000.

The rash of modern sightings prompted Canadian diver and historian Jacques Boisvert to organize the International Society of Dracontology of Lake Memphrémagog, which maintains an archive of Memphré sightings. In May 2003, Barbara Malloy founded her own International Dracontology Society in Newport, Vermont and threatened to sue Boisvert for "$100,000 in civil fines" if he used Memphré's name in public. The lawsuit was never filed, and Boisvert died in 2006, at age 73. Meanwhile, Duncan Kilmartin, an official spokesman for the town of Newport, proclaimed that Memphé's name could be used freely by "anybody, anywhere, anyplace."

While the legal arguments amused or irritated local residents, Memphré sightings continued in the 21st century. August 2002 produced two sightings near Derby, Vermont, while Barbara Malloy claimed three sightings at Newport in May 2003. That same month, another witness saw a shiny black 30-ft. creature resembling a whale at Castle Brook, Vermont. On June 5, 2005, Vermont resident Al MacEachern and his 8-year-old granddaughter saw "three large black humps" while they fished from a boat near the U.S.-Canadian border. The mystery remains unsolved.

Further Reading: *Memphre: The Monster of Lake Memphremagog*, http://www. vermonter.com/nek/memphremyth.asp, accessed May 15, 2009; *Sea Serpent*, http://www.memphreusa.com, accessed May 15, 2009.

NAHUELITO

Lago Nahuel Huapi ("Lake of the Tiger's Island," in Spanish) lies in the northern part of Argentina's Patagonia region, between the provinces of Río Negro and Neuquén. It is surrounded by 2,721 square miles of Nahuel Huapi National Park. Located 2,510 ft. above sea

level, the lake has a surface area of 204 square miles and a maximum recorded depth of 1,437 ft. It is divided into seven branches—Blest, Huemul, Campanario, Machete, del Rincon, de la Triesteza, and Última Esperanza—and linked by rivers to several smaller lakes. Various islands dot its surface, with the largest—Isla Victoria—spanning 12 square miles.

Although remote from any ocean and located at 2,510 ft. above sea level, Nahuel Huapi Lake is home to two bird species found nowhere else but at sea—the kelp gull and the blue-eyed cormorant. If local legends and eyewitness reports are accurate, it also hides a monster.

The first account of the aquatic cryptid known today as *Nahuelito* ("Little Nahuel") dates from April 1817, when two hunters, Milacsek and Shirdos, collected native reports of a strange animal inhabiting the lake. Milacsek and Shirdos also claimed to have killed a flying animal resembling a pterodactyl outside a cave near Nahuel Huapi Lake, but they had no evidence to prove it.

Almost a century later, in April 1910, witness George Garrett and his son saw "an object which appeared to be 15–20 ft. in diameter and perhaps 6 ft. above the water," paddling near Pass Coytrué inlet. Soon afterward, two British prospectors reported seeing a similar beast in the same vicinity.

Still, sightings of Nahuelito seldom made news outside of Argentina until 1922, when American prospector Martin Sheffield reported his encounter to Clemente Onelli (1864–1924), director of the Buenos Aires Zoo. Onelli, an Italian naturalist and paleontologist, had moved to Argentina in the 1890s and participated in various border surveys before taking his job at the zoo. During his travels, he collected reports of Argentinean lake monsters resembling ancient plesiosaurs, and in 1922 Onelli saw his chance to capture one alive.

His expedition began on March 23, 1922, but was hampered by rough terrain, a shortage of supplies, and complaints from Argentina's Society for the Protection of Animals. The hunters reached Nahuel Huapi Lake but found no monsters and returned home empty-handed on April 26. Onelli still believed in Nahuelito's existence, but government officials refused to support further research prior to Onelli's death, two years later.

Sightings of Nahuelito continue to the present day. On February 16, 1978, a priest named Mauricio Rumboll claimed that his mother had seen the creature swimming with its long neck raised 10 ft. above the lake's surface. More sightings were logged during summer 1979, and local television stations aired video footage of an indistinct large object moving across Nahuel Huapi Lake in March 1989.

On January 1, 1994, multiple witnesses saw Nahuelito at close range and in broad daylight. One observer, Paula Jacarbe, claimed that she was near enough to hear the creature breathing. Another member of the party, Jessica Campbell, reported two more sightings on a single afternoon in summer 1996, at Peninsula de San Pedro. As in the 1994 case, several friends confirmed those incidents.

In April 2006, Scott Corrales—a Spanish-speaking Pennsylvania native, whose *Inexplicata* newsletter reports unsolved mysteries from Latin America—published three supposed photographs of Nahuelito on the Cryptomundo Web site. According to Corrales, an unknown man left the photos with a receptionist at *Inexplicata's* editorial office, along with a note that read: "This is not a tree trunk with a capricious shape. This is not a wave. Nahuelito showed his face. Lake Nahuel Huapi, Saturday, April 15, 9 A.M. I'm not giving my personal information to avoid future headaches."

The photos seem to show a snakelike creature with its mouth open, moving through water with vertical undulations that are physically impossible for a reptilian spine. Corrales told the world, "We are presenting the images. Let each one reach his/her own conclusions." Spokesmen for the respected British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club noted "the pictures are quite spectacular, so good, in fact, that they appear to be hoaxed." In fact, they suggested that Nahuelito shots might be recycled photos of the Loch Ness monster, faked by hoaxer Frank Searle in the 1960s.

Another apparent hoax surfaced on the YouTube Web site in 2007, featuring a video clip of a young Hispanic man standing beside a supposed Nahuelito carcass beached beside a lake. The video clip is in Spanish, but it is obvious that the animal in repose at his feet was sculpted out of sand or clay.

Further Reading: Kirk, J. *In the Domain of the Lake Monsters*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 1998), pp. 250–54.

NESSIE

Loch Ness, in the Scottish Highlands, is Britain's greatest lake. Loch Lomond boasts a slightly larger surface area (5.5 square miles), but at 23 miles long, with an official depth of 754 ft.—or 975 ft., according to soundings made from the submersible *Pisces* in 1969—Loch Ness contains more water than all other lakes in England and Wales combined.

Reports of water horses in Loch Ness and other Highland lakes predate recorded history. The creatures, also known as kelpies, are portrayed in Pictish art and ancient legends, while the first official sighting dates from around 565 C.E. Ireland's Saint Columba (521–597) had brought his religious message to Scotland two years earlier, launching a

The Loch Ness monster is sometimes seen on shore. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

crusade that would endure for the remainder of his life. While traveling along the River Ness, Columba saw a monster bearing down upon a swimmer and reportedly invoked God's name to make the beast retreat.

Critics who scoff at Saint Columba's story also claim the Loch Ness monster was not seen again until the 1930s, but that claim is false. During the 1520s, witness Duncan Campbell saw a terrible beast come ashore at the lake, reportedly toppling trees and killing three men who got in its way. Jimmy Hossack reported a sighting of Nessie in 1862, and a witness named Mackenzie saw a creature resembling a capsized boat cross the lake in 1871 or 1872. In summer 1885, Roderick Matheson saw "the biggest eel I ever saw in my life," with "a neck like a horse and a mane." The following year, E.H. Bright and his cousin saw a large unknown four-legged beast emerge from the forest on shore and waddle into the lake. Alexander Macdonald reported a giant salamander swimming in Loch Ness in 1888. Multiple witnesses sighted a "horrible great beastie" in 1895, while several more saw Nessie at Fort Augustus in 1896. An unnamed Gypsy woman also reported a sighting near Dores, on the lake's northeastern shore, in the 1890s.

Sightings continued in the early 20th century. Three witnesses observed the classic upturned boat form of Nessie—resembling the hull of a capsized rowboat—in December 1903. In 1907, John McLeod described an eel-like creature 30–40 ft. long swimming on the lake's surface. In September 1909 or 1912 (reports differ), several children saw a gray 20-ft. creature with two short legs rush from the woods at Inchnacardoch Bay and plunge into the lake. Mrs. William Miller saw the familiar upturned boat in July 1914, while her husband and companion James McGillvray witnessed it in May 1923. Between those sightings, James Cameron saw an enormous animal surface beside his boat (in 1916), and three more witnesses saw a long-necked, camel-colored quadruped on shore (in 1919). The creature Alfred Cruikshank saw on shore in April 1923 was 20–25 ft. long, 5–7 ft. in diameter, and khaki green, with four legs and large, webbed feet. Cumming McGillvray's wife logged a sighting of a horse-sized swimming beast in August 1929, while Ian Milne claimed a meeting with "an enormous conger eel" in July 1930.

Even then, few people outside of Great Britain had heard of Nessie before 1933, when construction of a new highway along the lake's western shore removed thousands of trees, thus providing a clear view of Loch Ness for drivers and hikers. While no two sources agree on the total number of sightings on file, Dr. Roy Mackal, writing in 1976, claimed that "over the years there have been at least 10,000 *reported* sightings at Loch Ness but less than a third of those *recorded*." Many sightings by native Scots, including monks at Fort Augustus Abbey, were never published.

Modern Nessie sightings include at least 26 reports of cryptids seen on land (most recently on February 22, 1999), and at least 34 cases involving multiple witnesses. One of the strangest group sightings occurred in June 1933, when passengers aboard an airplane flying over Loch Ness described "a shape resembling a large alligator," 25 ft. long and 4 ft. wide. On March 8, 1996, two busloads of students en route to their school saw Nessie swimming in the loch.

Nessie is the most photographed cryptid on earth. At last count, in 2007, there were at least 70 still photos, 31 motion picture films, and 4 videotapes that purport to show Nessie in action. Five other witnesses reported Internet sightings via live web cameras at Loch Ness between June 1999 and February 2004. Some have been explained as showing nat-

ural phenomena (ducks, waves, floating logs, etc.), while others are obvious hoaxes. Some of the more dramatic—and still controversial—filmed evidence includes the following:

- November 1933: Hugh Gray snapped Nessie's first photo at Foyers, apparently depicting a large body in the water.
- April 1934: Dr. Kenneth Wilson took two photos of an apparent long-necked creature in Loch Ness. Sixty years later, elderly Christian Spurling claimed that he had faked the best-known photo with a model made from "plastic wood" and mounted on a toy submarine. However, plastic wood did not exist in 1934, and Spurling could not explain Wilson's second photo, which reveals the creature diving with its head in a different posture than that of the first photograph.
- May 1938: G.E. Taylor took the first color movie footage of Nessie, near Foyers. Analysts disagree on whether it shows a live animal or a dead horse floating in the lake.
- April 1960: Tim Dinsdale filmed an object moving across the loch's surface. Royal Air Force photo experts declared that the object was probably animate, measuring 12–16 ft. long.
- August 1972: Underwater footage shot by members of the Academy of Applied Science included two frames revealing an apparent triangular flipper passing in front of the camera.
- June 1975: Members of the same team snapped more underwater photos, revealing an apparent long-necked creature and a close-up of its head. The latter photo has been challenged as depicting a submerged tree stump that was found and hauled to the surface in October 1987. The former remains unexplained.
- May 1977: Two dramatic photos of Nessie raising its head above water were snapped by Anthony Shiels. Critics insist that the photos were faked, referring to its subject as the "Loch Ness Muppet."
- July 2000: Melissa Bavister photographed a two-humped object off the northern shore of Loch Ness. Jim Cordiner, a professor of photography at Glasgow's School of Building and Printing, stated that the photo shows a 25-ft. object halfway across the loch. Cordiner pronounced the photo genuine, denying that it shows a boat, wave, or reflection on the water.
- August 2002: Webcam viewer Andrew Whyley claimed "the best underwater pictures of Nessie in 27 years," saying the object "moved all over the screen and seemed to have a purpose in its movement."
- May 2007: Gordon Holmes, a laboratory technician, videotaped a "jet-black thing, about 45 ft. long, moving fairly fast in the water" at Loch Ness. Professional debunker Ben Radford replied that the "the video shows neither the creature's color nor its size; it is simply something moving in the water."

Nessie, or some other large object, has also been captured on sonar—an acronym for sound navigation and ranging—a device that uses underwater sound waves to detect and measure distances or objects. Between December 1954 and July 2001, researchers scored at least 53 different sonar hits on large unidentified objects at Loch Ness. One sonar recording of two unknown objects coincided with the flipper photograph in August 1972.

Submerged microphones also recorded apparent animal sounds at Loch Ness in 1995 and 2000. The tapes reveal pig-like grunting noises whose frequency matched that of calls produced by elephant seals, killer whales, and walruses (none of which live in Loch Ness).

Reporters with the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) conducted their own sonar tests at Loch Ness in July 2003. These tests, coupled with satellite photography, led them to claim that negative results "prove Nessie does not exist." Monster hunter Jan Sundberg, founder of Sweden's Global Underwater Search Team, challenged those results after speaking to experts at Kongsberg Simrad (manufacturers of radar, underwater cameras, and similar gear), which provided the BBC's equipment. According to the firm's product manager, Erik Stenersen, Simrad gear cannot penetrate water below 325 ft. and would not enable the BBC to scan all of Loch Ness. "If they did," Stenersen said, "they used a technology we never heard about, but we are world-leading in this area." Spokesmen for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration also denied that satellite instruments could locate or track submerged animals.

Researchers, for and against Nessie's existence, suggest a wide range of explanations for the sightings. Aside from deliberate hoaxes, they include:

- Familiar objects misidentified, including birds, seals, logs, mirages, waves, and boat wakes.
- Relict plesiosaurs, based on descriptions of Nessie's long neck, an explanation favored by early theorists and still supported by researcher Robert Rines in 2008 (though he believes the creatures are now extinct). Skeptics insist that plesiosaurs died off 65 million years ago, and that even if some *did* survive, cold-blooded reptiles could not live in the loch's chilly water.
- A large, long-necked aquatic mammal unknown to science. This theory was first proposed by Dutch author Antoon Oudemans in 1933 and later supported by various cryptozoologists including Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans. Critics note that the fossil record includes no such creatures from earlier times. Roy Mackal suggests a relict population of primitive whales, known as basilosaurus, presumed extinct for 37 million years.
- Large unknown amphibians, resembling giant long-necked salamanders, initially proposed by Dr. Roy Mackal in 1972. (Mackal later changed his mind.) Again, no such creatures appear in the fossil record, and amphibians would suffer the same problems as reptiles in the loch's cold water.
- Giant eels, suggested by various witnesses since Roderick Matheson's sighting in 1885 and most recently defended by author Richard Freeman in 2003. Three witnesses claimed sightings of a 30-ft. eel near Dores, in January 2004, but investigator Steve Feltham identified the creature as a plastic drainpipe from a lakeside fish farm.
- Giant salmon, proposed by Dennis Dickson in 2002. Dickson claimed that his family once tried to start a caviar business at Loch Ness, but succeeded only in breeding huge fish, which escaped or were released into the lake.
- Large invertebrates of various species, first suggested by Roy Mackal in 1966, when he proposed that Nessie was a giant sea slug adapted to live in fresh water. Two years later, F.W. Holliday suggested a huge version of *Tullimonstrum*, a prehistoric sea creature whose fossils resemble a long-necked lake monster but which, apparently, never exceeded 6 in. in length. In 1984, Anthony Shiels proposed an unknown giant octopus.

- A swimming elephant, suggested by Neil Clark, curator of paleontology at Glasgow University's Hunterian Museum in 2006. While no elephants live in Scotland, much less under water, Clark theorized that traveling circuses may have let their pachyderms bathe in the lake, where their exposed backs and raised trunks inspired Nessie's legend. Clark's theory fails to account for sightings before 1933, or those in recent years when no circuses were present.
- Paranormal Nessie, described by various authors as a supernatural creature capable of appearing and vanishing at will. Controversial author Jon-Erik Beckjord claims that Nessie "is not a biological full time zoological animal but rather that it is a paranormal/supernatural/wormhole-traversing being that will never be caught nor killed. And we have a film that shows it coming from a space-time wormhole, and going later back into it." That film has not been publicly released.

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OCTOPUS GIGANTEUS

On November 30, 1896, two bicyclists found a large rotting carcass stranded at Crescent Beach, near St. Augustine, Florida. Their report brought Dr. DeWitt Webb, founder of the St. Augustine Historical Society and Institute of Science, to sketch and photograph the globster. He noted the stumps of four severed arms and found one of the arms buried in sand nearby, and concluded that the creature was a giant octopus. Contradictory published reports described the carcass as 18–23 ft. long, 7–18 ft. wide, 4–6 ft. high, and weighing 5–7 tons.

On December 8, Webb sent his photos to J. A. Allen at Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Allen passed them on to Dr. Addison Verrill at Yale, then considered America's leading expert on cephalopods. Though Verrill never visited St. Augustine, he identified the creature from photos as a giant squid—then changed his mind two months later, proclaiming it a new species of giant octopus which he called *Octopus giganteus*. Based on measurements of the carcass, Verrill said the giant's arms might be 75–100 ft. long and 18 in. thick at their base.

Meanwhile, Dr. Webb preserved samples of the creature's tough flesh and sent them off for scientific study at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. We have no idea if those tests were performed, as no results were ever published. Dr. Verrill went on to publish a series of letters and articles that created utter confusion. In January 1897, he reverted to his giant squid hypothesis, but then switched back to *Octopus giganteus* on February 14. On March 5 he decided that while the carcass might be "compatible with the structure of some unknown reptile or fish," and that it probably came from a dead sperm whale's head.

But what a strange whale! On March 19, Verrill admitted that "the shape is decidedly unlike the head of an ordinary sperm whale." Instead, he asked readers to "imagine a sperm whale with an abnormally large nose, due to disease or old age," then admitted that "it seems hardly probable that another allied whale, with a big nose, remains to be discovered." The journal *Natural Science* reminded Verrill that "one should not attempt to describe specimens on the coast of Florida, while sitting in one's study in Connecticut."

The matter rested for 60 years, until Dr. Forrest Wood, a curator at Florida's Marineland, read about the case in 1957 and visited the Smithsonian Institution with Joseph Gennaro, a cellular biologist from the University of Florida. They found DeWitt's tissue samples still preserved in formalin, and Gennaro compared them to samples from various sea creatures, announcing that the flesh was "similar to, if not identical with, that in my octopus sample." Dr. Roy Mackal completed his own biochemical tests on the tissue in 1986, reporting that the flesh "was essentially a huge mass of collagenous protein" and "certainly was not blubber." His findings pointed to "a gigantic cephalopod, probably an octopus, not referable to any known species."

Still, the verdict was not unanimous. In 1995, scientists from the University of Maryland and the Indianapolis Faculty of Medicine issued a report claiming that the St. Augustine tissue *was* whale blubber after all. While skeptics seized on that report and ignored all others, French cryptozoologist Michel Raynal published a critique of the latest study, listing its various failures and branding the conclusion complete nonsense. Even author Richard Ellis, ever anxious to debunk sea monsters, rejected the blubber diagnosis, stating flatly that the Florida carcass "was a giant octopus."

Who is correct? Eyewitness sightings collected since World War II suggest that giant octopuses may, in fact, exist. Noteworthy cases include:

- 1941: While sailing from Fort Lauderdale to St. Augustine aboard the USS *Chicopee*, crewman John Martin saw what he took for a huge knot of kelp floating on the ocean's surface. Closer observation left him in "no doubt" that the object was an octopus 30 ft. across, with huge arms 3 ft. in circumference "coiled but moving slowly."
- 1956: A year before his own investigation of the St. Augustine globster, Forrest Wood collected stories of the *lusca*, a giant octopus reported from deep blue holes in the Bahamas, 55 miles from Florida's coast.
- 1967: Bruce Wright, director of New Brunswick's Northeastern Wildlife Station, published reports of the *lusca* dating back to 1500, when Pietro Martire (official biographer of Christopher Columbus) described one such monster snatching a Spaniard from an island beach.
- 1984: Bermudan fisherman John Ingham complained that a giant octopus had destroyed his crab and fish traps. On September 16 he hooked one of the giants, which towed his boat for half an hour before the line snapped. Based on sonar printouts of that animal, Bennie Rohr, a marine biologist with the U.S. National Maritime Fisheries Service, agreed that it was probably a giant octopus. Ingham caught another of the beasts in 1985, procuring a 50-lb. chunk of tissue before it escaped, but he regrettably discarded the flesh after snapping inconclusive photographs.

Further Reading: Newton, M. *Florida's Unexpected Wildlife*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), pp. 33–47.

OGOPOGO

Okanagan Lake is the fourth-largest lake in British Columbia, at 84 miles long and 3 miles wide. Its maximum measured depth is 754 ft., but greater depths are suspected under shelves along the shoreline. Aboriginal tribesmen believed that a large creature known as *naitaka* lived in the lake, and sightings of unknown aquatic animals—known collectively as "Ogopogo" since the 1920s—continue to the present day.

Pioneer Susan Allison logged the first white settler's sighting of Ogopogo in 1872, though John MacDougal blamed the creature for drowning a team of horses at Okanagan Lake 12 years earlier. Sightings of the creature(s) have been fairly constant ever since. In 1914, a 6-ft. carcass weighing 400 lbs. with a round head and blue-gray skin washed ashore at the lake. An amateur naturalist identified the globster as a dead manatee, though none of those aquatic mammals are known to live in Canada. No part of the remains was saved for later testing.

In 1924, British composers Cumberland Clark and Mark Strong wrote a song titled "The Ogo-Pogo," about a mythical creature whose "mother was an earwig, his father was a whale." F. H. Beattie, with the Vernon (B.C.) Board of Trade, soon wrote a parody referring to the beast of Okanagan Lake as "Ogopogo," and the name caught on. In August 1926, the *Vancouver Daily Province* declared the nickname official. Soon afterward, on September 16, occupants of 30 cars watched Ogopogo swimming off Kelowna's Okanagan Mission Beach.

Ogopogo witnesses generally describe creatures ranging from 20 to 70 ft. in length, with smooth skin colored dark blue, green, gray, or black. Its head, when seen, is often said to resemble a horse's, mounted atop a 5- to 10-ft. neck. Some witnesses report a pair of stubby horns atop the creature's head. When the head and neck are submerged, Ogopogo—like Scotland's Nessie—frequently resembles a capsized boat, though some witnesses describe a series of humps on the water's surface. Others refer to a forked tail, which may suggest flukes like those of a whale.

Aside from the sightings of September 16, 1926, many other Ogopogo reports involve multiple witnesses. They include: five yachtsmen (August 1926), two visiting families (July 1949), 16 bus passengers (June 1950), another party of 15 (July 1954), 30 diners at a church picnic (July 1962), 15 cannery workers (July 1967), 30 persons at a lakeside campground (February 1978), 50-odd tourists at Blue Bird Bay Resort (August 1980), four members of the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club (July 1989), and members of a documentary film crew (April 2002).

Aside from hundreds of eyewitness sightings, Ogopogo has also been photographed on at least 19 occasions since 1967, when Eric Parmenter snapped the creature's first known photo. Arthur Folden produced the first motion picture film of Ogopogo in August 1968. Longtime researcher Arlene Gaal claims four photographic encounters with Ogopogo, in 1978, 1979, 1981, and 1989. Eugene Boiselle delivered the first hazy videotape of Okanagan Lake's creature in September 1982. A 90-second film clip of the animal, shot by documentary film makers on April 18, 2002, reveals a dark lump moving through the water with "something sideways, something strange" on top. John Casorso made a long-distance videotape of Ogopogo near Rattlesnake Island, offshore from Peachland, on August 9, 2004, but he failed to collect a $10,000 reward offered for proof of the creature's existence.

Today, Ogopogo's celebrity in Canada rivals that of Nessie in Scotland. A Canadian postage stamp, issued in 1990, depicts an artist's rendering of the creature. In 2005, John Henderson directed a film based on Ogopogo, but aboriginal protests blocked him from using the animal's popular name. Instead, he called it *Mee-Shee*. Jim Henson's Creature Shop modeled the monster's face on late actor Walter Matthau. Ironically, although the tale was set in Canada, Henderson filmed most of his movie in New Zealand.

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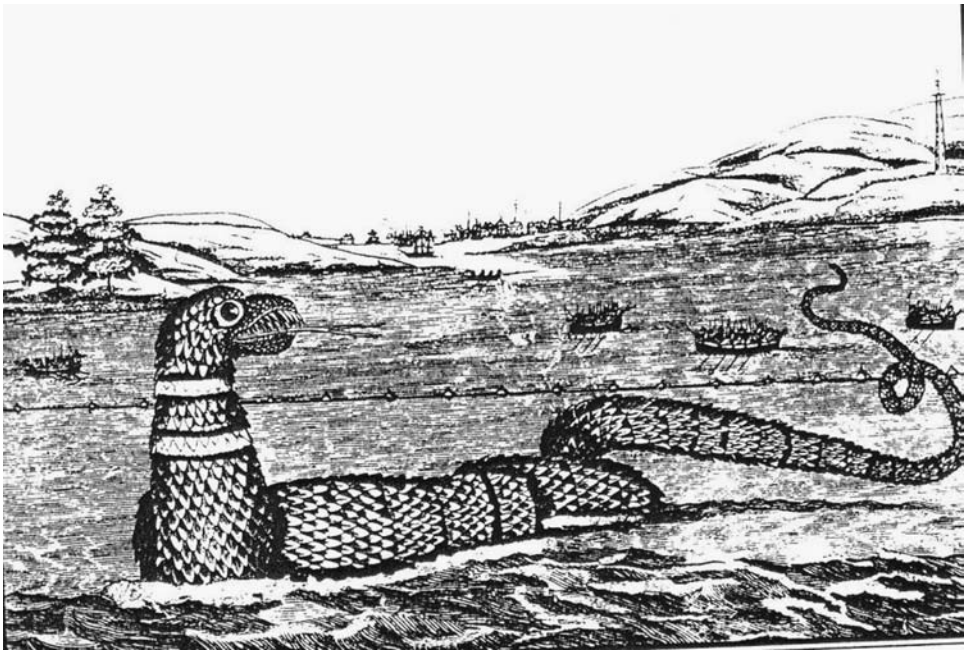
SCOLIOPHIS ATLANTICUS

North America's most famous and persistent sea serpent revealed itself to European explorers for the first time in 1638, at Cape Ann, Massachusetts. Several Englishmen were passing in a boat with two Native Americans when they saw the creature "coiled up like a cable upon a rock." The Englishmen wanted to shoot it, but the natives talked them out of it, fearing an attack if the monster was not killed instantly.

Three years later, in September 1641, several witnesses saw a large creature swimming offshore from Lynn, Massachusetts. They described the animal as being 90 ft. long and as thick as a wine barrel. In 1746, a serpent with a horse-like head and a body resembling a string of barrels appeared off the New England coast. In May 1751, sailors aboard the *Intrepid* saw a creature longer than their 85-ton ship in Maine's Broad Bay. Residents of Maine logged six more sightings during the American Revolution (1776–81), and peace brought no end to the reports. Large serpentine creatures were seen at least 11 more times, swimming off the coasts of Maine, Massachusetts, and Nova Scotia, between 1784 and 1815.

New England's great sea serpent craze did not begin in earnest, however, until July 1817. Gloucester Harbor, in Massachusetts, produced 14 sightings in August 1817 alone, including several incidents where groups of witnesses watched the cryptid swimming back and forth, evading boatloads of pursuers as if playing hide-and-seek. On August 14, more than 30 witnesses gathered to watch a 100-ft. creature racing across the harbor. October 1817 found the beast off Long Island, New York, where it resurfaced in June 1818, before returning to the familiar waters of Massachusetts and Maine.



New England's "sea serpent" revealed itself to hundreds of witnesses in the early 19th century. (Author's collection)

Another rash of summer sightings ensued, including seven more at Gloucester. Citizens of Portland, Maine, reported three encounters with a creature described as 120 ft. long. Despite its huge size, witness Timothy Hodgkins believed that the beast was "perfectly harmless, and might be easily caught." In fact, rewards were offered for the sea serpent, alive or dead, but even Nantucket's world-famous whalers proved helpless to bag it.

The pattern of summer sightings continued for nine more years, but with declining frequency. A total of 29 sightings were reported between 1819 and 1827, with only one in the latter year. All but three of those reports came from Massachusetts witnesses; the remainder included one report from New Hampshire, one from Nova Scotia, and one from sailors aboard the *Gold Hunter,* en route from Wales to New York in the mid-Atlantic.

While hundreds of witnesses watched the New England sea serpent, scientists tried to decide what it was. The Linnean Society of New England held a special meeting on August 18, 1817 and created a three-man committee to "collect evidence with regard to the existence and appearance" of the creature. Its members included Dr. Jacob Bigelow, Judge John Davis, and naturalist Francis Gray. All three were graduates of Harvard University, where Dr. Bigelow taught medicine and science. They applied themselves to the investigation with great energy, but had little success until September 27, when two boys killed a peculiar hump-backed snake at Loblolly Cove, near Cape Ann.

The snake was only 3 ft., 6 in. long, but its lumpy spine resembled that of the larger sea serpent that had visited Cape Ann on September 22. While local residents lined up to view the reptile, the Linnean Society's committee issued a 14-page report concluding:

> On the whole, as these two animals agree in so many conspicuous, important and peculiar characteristics, and as no material difference between them has yet been clearly pointed out, excepting that of size, the Society will probably feel justified in considering them as individuals of the same species, and entitled to the same name, until a more close examination of the great Serpent shall have disclosed some difference of structure, important enough to constitute a specific distinction.

In fact, the committee proposed a scientific name for the sea serpent: *Scoliophis atlanticus,* or "Atlantic humped snake."

The ink was barely dry on that report before a French zoologist, Ducrotay de Blainville, contradicted it, suggesting that the Loblolly Cove specimen was simply a deformed specimen of *Coluber constrictor*—the common eastern racer. Another French scientist, Constantine Rafinesque (1783–1840), subsequently renamed the New England sea serpent *Megophias* ("big snake").

By any name, the creature continued to visit America's Eastern Seaboard. After a three-year absence, it returned for three appearances in 1830 and was seen another 30 times between 1831 and 1839. All but one of those sightings (at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in August 1839) occurred off the coasts of Maine and Massachusetts. Further sightings in the 19th century included 16 in the 1840s, five in the 1850s, one in 1869, 20 in the 1870s, 31 in the 1880s, and 17 in the 1890s. As before, many of the witnesses were professional sailors and fishermen, familiar with whales and other large sea creatures known to science. Most of the sightings from shore involved multiple witnesses.

New England sea serpent sightings declined in the 20th century, but they did not end, by any means. A total of 20 sightings occurred between the years 1901 and 1909, seven between 1911 and 1915, three in the 1920s, 14 in the 1930s, and one in 1941. Maine and

Massachusetts remained the monster's favorite territory, but it strayed north to Canada for a dozen sightings, twice visited New York, and once swam as far south as Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

America's involvement in World War II (1941–45) apparently discouraged *Scoliophis atlanticus* from visiting the Eastern Seaboard, but it returned for two appearances off Massachusetts and North Carolina in 1947, with a detour to New Hampshire the following year. Witnesses reported three more sightings between 1956 and 1958, and four more between 1960 and 1962. All but one were logged from Maine and Massachusetts, with the sole exception noted from Prince Edward Island, Canada. Witness Keith Ross described a creature with a 9-ft. neck seen swimming off Cape Sable, Nova Scotia, in July 1976.

Newfoundland fishermen Charles Bungay and C. Clarke, from Fortune Bay, reported the most recent sighting on record on May 4, 1997. According to Bungay, the men saw what appeared to be a string of floating garbage bags and decided to haul them aboard their boat, but when they got within 50 ft. the bags came to life. Bungay told reporters, "It turned its head and looked right at us. All we could see was a neck six feet long, a head like a horse, but his dark eyes were on the front of its face . . . like a human. . . . He just looked at us and slid under the water and disappeared." When interviewed by Dr. Paul Leblond, Bungay estimated the creature's length at 30–40 ft., adding that its skin was scaly and it seemed to have ears or horns atop its head measuring 6–8 in. long.

Further Reading: O'Neill, J. *The Great New England Sea Serpent*. (Camden, Maine: Downeast Books, 1999).

SELMA

Seljordsvatnet (Seljord Lake) is a body of water in the landlocked county of Telemark, in central Norway. Its name derives from the nearby town of Seljord. The lake is relatively modest, less than 12 miles long and barely 1.5 miles wide, with a maximum recorded depth of 488 ft., yet its tradition of dramatic monster sightings dates from 1750.

In the summer of that year, witness Gunleid Andersson-Verpe was rowing his boat from Ulvneset to Nes, when a giant sea horse allegedly attacked and capsized the craft. Andersson-Verpe escaped unharmed, but his report prompted other Seljordsvatnet boatmen to carry spears and axes for self-defense. The first clear description of "Selma" (also called "Seljora") comes from Hans Klokkarstogo, captain of a 19th-century paddle-wheeler. He and members of his crew described the creature as serpentine, with the head and mane of a horse and a tail like that of a fish.

In 1880, local resident Bjorn Bjørgie killed a strange-looking lizard on Seljordsvatnet's shore. It measured 3 ft. long, and Bjørgie thought it was a young lake monster, but his neighbors feared to approach or preserve the carcass, which lay rotting on the beach for several weeks before it finally vanished.

Selma sightings continued throughout the 20th century. Karl Karlsson saw the beast in 1918 while fishing from a bridge at Sandnes. Two years later, witness Eivind Fjodstuft described a black crocodile 50–65 ft. long, crawling along the shore at Sinnesodden Point. Over the next 50 years, many witnesses reported hump-backed creatures swimming in the lake. The beasts ranged from 13 to 175 ft. long, with an average around 30 ft. Some

observers described long necks topped by heads resembling those of a horse or deer. Most sightings are recorded during summer months.

Monster-hunters have organized searches for Selma since September 1969, when scuba-diving brothers Alf and Arne Thomassen reported finding deep grooves in Seljordsvatnet's bed, as if some heavy object had been dragged along at a depth of 50 ft. Arne Thomassen returned in March 1970, planting echo sounders and underwater cameras around Sinnesodden Point. The cameras were triggered several times by moving objects, but the photographs revealed nothing.

Dentist Rolf Langeland saw Selma in 1975, describing a creature 98–163 ft. long; he returned with 10 companions for a two-week vigil dubbed Operation Summerbird, in 1976. One team member claimed two sightings and snapped several photos, all of which proved inconclusive. Arne Thomassen also returned to Seljordsvatnet, diving with powerful lights to a depth of 98 ft., where he found more drag marks on the lake's bed.

The most persistent Selma-hunters are Swedish cryptozoologist Jan-Ove Sundberg and his Global Underwater Search Team (GUST). During their first expedition, in July 1977, GUST members recorded several sonar hits on large submerged objects, including one printout of three objects moving on parallel courses. The team also logged multiple surface sightings of a torpedo-shaped object 10–16 ft. long.

Back at Seljordsvatnet in July 1978, Sundberg reportedly glimpsed an unknown creature with a lizard-like head 10–12 in. long, raised 12–16 in. above the water on a slender neck. He shot two rolls of 8mm film, but the sighting occurred near nightfall and the film revealed nothing substantial.

The GUST team returned in 1998 and 2000, both times recording further sonar contacts and underwater recordings of sounds like "a cross between a snorting horse and an eating pig," whose source remains unidentified. Team member Eric Knatterud claimed a surface sighting of Selma in August 2000, but the creature submerged before he could aim his camera. The expedition in 2000 also featured a custom-made trap called "COMET" (Co-Operative Monster Eel Trap)—a tube 18 ft. long, designed to catch Selma alive for study—but the creature(s) managed to avoid it.

In August 2004, Sundberg's team produced a videotape of what they described as "a baby sea monster," approximately 4 ft., 10 in. long. While skeptics ridiculed still photos from the video, Sundberg explained that the tape depicted a mirage of the swimming creature. "We have filmed an animal that moves itself up and down in the water," he told reporters. Sundberg also claimed another underwater recording of Selma, taped at Tjuvholmen. "It was like a lion that roared in the jungle," he said, "and it was directly underneath the boat. We heard only one roar, and then we heard a smaller sound before it disappeared." Two years later, on his sixth visit to Seljordsvatnet, Sundberg scored two more sonar hits on objects 13–17 ft. long moving through the lake's depths.

Tourist sightings of Selma continue to the present day. In 1992, Erik Nordseth shot 20 seconds of videotape depicting some unknown object 10–15 ft. long, cruising along Seljordsvatnet's surface at 8–14 mph. Kari Aakre and her family saw three of the creatures swimming in tandem, near Seljord, in July 1995. On July 23, 2003, a local resident saw two large, unidentified animals "chasing each other" across the lake.

Critics reject Selma's existence on two primary grounds. First, they say that Seljordsvatnet and its native fish population are too small to feed a colony of large predators. Second,

they note that the lake was a chasm of ice until some 10,000 years ago, and that it has no access to the sea. How, skeptics ask, could a sea monster find its way into the lake?

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TESSIE

Lake Tahoe spans the border between California and Nevada. It is 22 miles long and 12 miles across at its widest point, with an average depth of 989 ft. and a maximum recorded depth of 1,645 ft. Surrounded by mountains, ski resorts, and gambling casinos (on the Nevada side), Lake Tahoe is known for its clear, cold water and for a resident cryptid that locals call "Tessie."

Like other lake monsters worldwide, Tessie was named in homage to Loch Ness's Nessie, but the creature has its own distinct history spanning three centuries. Members of the aboriginal Paiute and Washoe tribes warned white settlers about Tahoe's mysterious creatures long before Nevada achieved statehood in 1861, and various sightings followed, describing a serpentine creature 12–25 ft. long. Those reports, in turn, spawned myths that Lake Tahoe is "bottomless" and that bodies of victims drowned in the lake never surface.

One story widely-circulated on the Internet involves a claim that renowned French oceanographer Jacques Cousteau (1910–97) visited Lake Tahoe in the mid-1970s and emerged from a dive in the lake to tell reporters, "The world isn't ready for what is down there!" The tale goes on to claim that Cousteau shot extensive underwater film footage at Lake Tahoe, but suppressed it to avert a panic. Another version of the tale describes Cousteau touring Tahoe's depths in a small submarine, finding perfectly-preserved bodies of victims drowned in the 19th century.

In fact, while other members of Cousteau's adventurous family *have* visited Lake Tahoe, Jacques himself never made the journey nor the cryptic statements frequently attributed to him on various Web sites. No record exists of any Cousteau exploring the lake with a submersible or scuba gear.

Of course, the fact that Jacques Cousteau never saw Tessie does not prove the creature is mythical. Modern sightings of Lake Tahoe's unknown inhabitants include the following:

- June 1982: While water-skiing at the lake, off-duty police officers Kris Beebe and Jerry Jones saw a large, dark-colored animal swimming within 25 ft. of their boat.
- June 1984: Witnesses Patsy McKay and Diane Stavarakas watched from shore as a hump-backed creature 17 ft. long surface several times.
- April 1985: Tourists Virgil Anderson and Mike Conway filmed an unknown creature with a fin on its back trailing a 25-ft. wake across Zephyr Cove, on the lake's southern shore.
- 1988: John Kirk, a founder of the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club, visited Lake Tahoe and reported "a number of strange waves that could not be explained as naturally occurring phenomena."
- 1991: Witness Andrew Navarro and a friend saw Tessie from a "party boat" on Lake Tahoe, later telling author John Kirk: "The first thing I saw was water shooting out

of the lake, like when a whale blows water out of its blow hole. Then I saw the surface of the water being disturbed by something underneath. This was followed by a hump of a brown creature which came out of the water. It moved around in a circle for a while and then it was gone. The movement of the creature was up and down, not side to side like a snake."

- April 2005: Two California tourists, Beth Douglas and Ron Talmage, saw a large object moving on the surface, with three to five humps showing. Skeptics dismissed the event as a sighting of waves produced by passing boats, but Talmage told reporters, "There were no big boats . . . This sucker's real."
- October 2007: Multiple witnesses watched Tessie swimming off Tahoe City's Commons Beach, while one observer videotaped a dark, humped object on the surface.

Dr. Charles Goldman, a professor at the University of California at Davis and founder of the UC Davis Tahoe Research Group, has studied Lake Tahoe and legends of Tessie for years. In January 2004, he presented a lecture on "USOs" (unidentified swimming objects) at the Squaw Valley Institute, reporting that several unnamed scientists claimed personal Tessie sightings. Goldman noted, however, that no witness has ever seen Tessie's head or tail, a circumstance that made Goldman conclude that most sightings involve the wakes of boats. Goldman met no monsters during several explorations of Lake Tahoe's depths in small submarines.

Skeptics suggest that, if Lake Tahoe does conceal a living mystery, the monster may be a sturgeon. No sturgeon have yet been caught or documented in Lake Tahoe, but theorists speculate that the lake might harbor a small population of white sturgeons, which may grow to 15 ft. long and weigh up to 1,500 lbs.

Further Reading: McCormick, B. *Tahoe Tessie*. (Sparks, NV: Tahoe Tourist Promotions, 1991).

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6

STRANGE SKIES

Reports of giant birds or other flying cryptids come from every inhabited continent on earth. Classic examples from folklore include the Native American thunderbird, so large that it could snatch whales from the sea, and Asia's roc, described by explorer Marco Polo (1254–1324) as an eagle with 30-ft. feathers and a habit of dining on elephants. Today, we know from fossil records that winged giants *did* exist in prehistoric times. The largest birds known to science belonged to the family *Teratornithidae*, including one species—*Argentavis magnificens*—which weighed 176 lbs. and boasted a 26-ft. wingspan. Some flying reptiles from the Cretaceous period were even larger. Hatzegopteryx had a wingspan exceeding 40 ft., while Quetzalcoatlus—discovered in 1971 and named for the Aztec flying serpent-god Quetzalcoatl—ran a close second at 39 ft. Another prehistoric flyer, Pteranodon, boasted a 30-ft. wingspan. All of these soaring giants are presumed extinct today—the reptiles for some 65 million years, and the teratorns (large birds of prey) for 10,000 years—yet sightings of similar creatures persist, from the jungles of Africa and New Guinea to 21st-century America.

AHOOL

Java is the world's 13th-largest island, and the fifth-largest in the Indonesian archipelago. It is also the most densely populated island on earth, with an estimated 124 million people occupying 48,919 square miles. About nine million of those people live in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital city. Ten other large cities claim another 14 million. Volcanic mountain ranges isolate large tracts of the island's interior, where the only human inhabitants are rice-growers.

One of those ranges, the Salak Mountains of western Java, reportedly harbors a winged cryptid known as ahool, in imitation of its distinctive hunting cry. Witnesses describe the ahool as having a 12-ft. wingspan, a coat of gray hair on a torso the size of a one-year-old child's, and a round head resembling that of a monkey with large, dark eyes. It is a nocturnal

hunter, armed with long claws on its flattened forearms, said to sleep in caves behind waterfalls during daylight hours and fly along rivers at night, snatching fish from the water.

The only ahool reports filed by a Western witness date from the 1920s, and the same man filed both reports. In 1925, Dr. Ernest Bartels—son of famed ornithologist Max Bartels, who discovered and named many Indonesian bird species—was examining a waterfall in the Salak Mountains, when a huge bat-like creature soared over his head. Two years later, at 11:30 one night in 1927, Bartels was at his home on western Java's Tjidjenkol River when he heard the loud cry. Rushing outside with a flashlight, Bartels chased the sound but failed to glimpse the creature.

Despite his own 1925 description of the ahool as a giant bat, Bartels later suggested that it might be a new species of owl. Two large owls are known from Java, one of which is the Bartels's wood-owl, named for Max Bartels, who discovered it in 1906. However, the owl's record specimen measured only 15 in. tall, with a 30-in. wingspan and tipping the scales at 1.5 lbs. In short, despite the similarity in calls, it is no match for the ahool.

Four decades after his last ahool encounter, Ernest Bartels teamed with naturalist Ivan Sanderson in 1966 to write an article for *Fate* magazine, which identified the ahool as a giant unknown bat, perhaps belonging to the suborder *Megachiroptera*. That suborder includes members of the genus *Pteropus*, ranked as the largest known bats in the world, also called "flying foxes." The largest species recognized by science is the flying fox, *Pteropus vampyrus*, though it feeds only on fruit and flowers. Found throughout Indonesia and Southeast Asia, flying foxes weigh up to 2.5 lbs. and have wingspans of 4–5 ft., but they still fail to rival descriptions of the ahool.

Ivan Sanderson speculated that the ahool might be identical to the olitau, a flying cryptid from Africa that he glimpsed in Cameroon five years after Ernest Bartels reported his second ahool encounter (see below). Sanderson believed that both were unknown giant bats, but other researchers compare the olitau to another African night-flyer, the kongamato, presumed by some to be a relict pterosaur from the Cretaceous period, presumed extinct for 65 million years (see below). In any case, without a specimen, any identification of the ahool remains pure speculation.

Further Reading: Bartels, E., and I. Sanderson, "The One True Batman," *Fate* 19 (July 1966): 83–92; Shuker, K., "A Belfry of Crypto-bats," *Fortean Studies* 1 (1994): 235–45.

BIGHOOT

Cryptozoologist Mark Hall coined the humorous nickname for this legendary giant owl in 1988, but Native Americans knew the huge bird centuries earlier. In eastern North America, members of the Iroquois, Passamaquoddy, Tuscarora, and Wyandot tribes called it "Big Head," "Great Head," the "Flying Head," or *Gee-bel-lowk* ("spirit of the night air"), describing it as a fiery-eyed demon that flew during storms, seeking human prey. Unless struck by lightning, the owls were invincible.

On the Great Plains, Omaha and Ponka tribesmen knew the flying giants as *Im-da-dhin-ga*, describing them as forest-dwellers large enough to pull up trees by their roots. The Shoshone spoke of *Hoh-hok*, a "spirit bird of the mountains," while farther west, the Wishram and Apache tribes lived in fear of "Big Owl." Everywhere the stories spread, native peoples described the huge owls as man-eaters, using them to frighten disobedient children.

Early European settlers heard those tales from native tribes, and soon had Bighoot stories of their own to share. Pioneers in the Ozark region—spanning the states of Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri—hunted, and were hunted by, a flying creature called the "Booger Owl." Much later, during World War I, a similar birdman sparked panic in Roane County, West Virginia, as described by Appalachian historian James G. Jones. He wrote:

> Its monstrous size and dark reddish feathers, which glistened in the sunlight, cast fear in all who saw it. Parents were so alarmed at its appearance that, for days afterward, they forbade their small children to play outside the house.

The giant owl returned to West Virginia in the late 1940s, hunting along the Ohio River in Jackson, Mason, and Wood Counties. Witnesses described it as standing 3–5 ft. tall when perched at rest, with a wingspan of 10 ft. or more. When seen on the ground with wings folded—like the huge specimen observed in southern Ohio during August 1982—Bighoot could be mistaken for a broken tree. A witness in that case reported that:

> While fishing at Rocky Fork Lake in Ohio we drifted into a pristine cove on the SW side [of the lake] and noted with utter disbelief an old tall topless tree trunk approx. 9–10 feet high, 112 inches around, move about 4 ft. sidewise. (This was about 20 ft. inland among like-looking trees with underbrush.) Again it moved only this time there was a partial twisting or rotation from the top 18–24 inches. It slowly maneuvered backward (keeping erect like a tree) into the woods with NO NOISES from it or [the] underbrush as graceful as a bird [through] a tree. It stopped in the mid [*sic*] of a sunlight clearing.

Next, she claimed, "[its] wings unfolded with a span greater than most small airplanes," then folded again to resume the former tree appearance. The witness glimpsed a "semblance of eyes," before dusk obscured her view. A year later, while fishing a half-mile from the same place, she says, "this figure appeared near [the] shoreline again. It seemed taller or leaner. This time [I] got a look at its legs and feet—yellowish grainy like chicken legs. . . . They were so thin and short for its height. Three *long* slender toes with a hooked toe or nail on lower leg."

Mark Hall believes that Bighoot is a species of giant owl presently unknown to science. He suggests the birds may be related to horned owls (genus *Bubo*), which include the largest owls on earth. One *Bubo* species, the Eurasian eagle-owl, may exceed 9 lbs. in weight and boast a 7-ft. wingspan. It hunts and consumes prey, including fawns and foxes more than twice its weight, but lacks the strength to carry off such heavy animals. Its normal range extends from Spain and Scandinavia, eastward across Europe and Asia to the Pacific Ocean and northern Japan.

North America's largest known owl species, the great horned owl, has a record height of 27 in. and a wingspan of 5 ft., 6 in., though most are smaller. A larger prehistoric species, Cuba's giant cursorial owl, weighed up to 20 lbs. and stood 3 ft., 4 in. tall, with small wings and unusually long legs suggesting a terrestrial lifestyle. Most paleontologists believe the giant owls became extinct in the Late Pleistocene era, between 10,000 and 8,000 years ago. They reject all sightings of similar creatures in modern times.

Further Reading: Hall, M. *Thunderbirds*. (New York: Paraview Press, 2004).

DEVIL BIRD

Residents of Sri Lanka, an island nation off the southern coast of India, describe a devil bird—also known as *ulama*—that is seldom seen but often heard at night, when it utters an eerie cry like that of "a boy in torture, whose screams are being stopped by being strangled." While not overly large, the devil bird frightens natives with its cries and is regarded as an omen of bad luck. It has escaped scientific identification for well over 300 years.

The first Western report of the devil bird came from British sea captain Robert Knox (1641–1720). Writing in 1681, Knox described the bird's "voice of the night" as "very shrill, almost like the barking of a dog." Another Englishman, Charles Pridham (1812–86), suggested in 1849 that the bird was a brown wood owl. Sir James Tennent (1804–69) logged the first eyewitness sighting of a devil bird in 1861, describing it as a pigeon-sized, long-tailed bird that he suspected was related to the nightjars. Ornithologist William Legge (1841–1918) was more specific in 1880, naming the devil bird as a gray nightjar. Author George Henry, writing in 1955, disagreed completely, claiming the devil bird was a forest (or spot-bellied) eagle owl.

With such confusion among expert ornithologists, it comes as no surprise that cryptozoologists disagree on the devil bird's identity. Some believe it may be Sri Lanka's common brown owl, discovered in 1873, but that bird is so well known to island natives that it seems unlikely they would be confused by its nocturnal calls. Other researchers suggest Kelaart's nightjar, whose male specimens utter cries in flight unlike those of any other known nightjar. The mystery was further muddled in 2001, when residents of one Sri Lankan village caught a forest eagle owl, proclaiming it to be the devil bird.

Whatever they may be, in fact, devil birds lack the size and disposition to threaten humans, but some Sri Lankans believe that their cries are an omen of impending death. Until such time as the birds are identified beyond doubt, that superstition will no doubt persist.

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KONGAMATO

Kongamato ("breaker of boats") is the native name for a large flying cryptid reported from various nations of south-central Africa. Descriptions from eyewitnesses are fairly consistent, but they point to creatures that, while recognized by science, are officially extinct. In fact, the most likely suspects apparently died out some 65 million years ago, about 62 million years before our first human ancestors appeared on Earth.

Frank Melland, a former member of the British colonial service in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), published the first Western report of kongamato in 1923, describing the creature as "a lizard with membranous wings like a bat." Native tribesmen told Melland that kongamato's "general color was red. It was believed to have no feathers but only skin on its body, and was believed to have teeth in its beak." When Melland showed the tribesmen drawings of a prehistoric pterosaur, "every native present immediately and unhesitatingly picked it out and identified it as a kongamato!"

Reporter G. Ward Price, of the London's *Daily Mail*, repeated Melland's experiment in 1925, after hearing reports of large birds attacking people in Rhodesian swamps. The

African witnesses compare the flying monster kongamato to a prehistoric pterosaur. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

first tribesman to whom Price showed his picture of a pterosaur screamed in fright and ran away. Three years later, game warden Blayney Percival reported a similar creature from Kenya. According to Percival:

> The Kitui Wakamba tell of a huge flying beast which comes down from Mount Kenya by night; they only see it against the sky, but they have seen its tracks; more, they have shown these to a white man, who told me about them, saying he could make nothing of the spoor, which betrayed two feet and an apparently heavy tail.

Another British game warden, Charles Pitman, served in Northern Rhodesia from 1931–33, and published his memoirs in 1942, including the following passage:

> I heard of a mythical beast which intrigued me considerably. It was said to haunt formerly, and perhaps still to haunt, a dense, swampy forest region in the neighborhood of the Angola and Congo borders. To look upon it is death. But the most amazing feature of this mystery beast is its suggested identity with a creature bat-bird-like in form on a gigantic scale reminiscent of a prehistoric pterodactyl.

Identical stories emerged from Tanzania, located between Kenya and Zambia, as reported by South African ichthyologist James L. B. Smith, in 1956. He wrote:

> The descendants of a missionary who had lived near Mount Kilimanjaro wrote from Germany giving a good deal of information about flying dragons they believed still live in those parts. The family had repeatedly heard of them from the natives, and one man had actually

> seen such a creature at night. I did not and do not dispute at least the possibility that some such creature may exist.

Smith should know; during 1938 he had a hand in the discovery of the first living coelacanth, a fish presumed extinct for the same length of time as the pterosaurs.

Before Smith's book was published in January 1956, British engineer J.P.F. Brown saw two strange creatures flying around Fort Roseberry (now Mansa, Zambia), near Lake Bangweulu. He described them as 4 ft., 6 in. long from nose to tail, with wingspans around 3 ft., 6 in. The following year, a man checked into Fort Roseberry's hospital with a severe chest wound, claiming a large bird had attacked him in the Bangweulu swamps. When asked to draw the creature, he sketched something resembling a pterosaur.

Publication of those reports brought more sightings to light, this time from southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). There, Mr. and Mrs. D. Gregor claimed sightings of flying lizards 2 ft., 6 in. long, while Dr. J. Blake-Thompson relayed stories from the Awemba tribe, describing huge, winged man-eating creatures that lived in caves above the Zambezi River. Construction of the Kariba Dam between 1955 and 1959 flooded part of the Zambezi Valley, and correspondent Ian Colvin snapped a photo of a supposed pterosaur for London's *Daily Telegraph,* but the picture proved to be a hoax.

Reports of kongamato continue. Swedish cryptozoologist Jan-Ove Sundberg announced two sightings in 1974–75. The first came from members of a British expedition to Kenya, the other from American travelers in Namibia. More recently, in 1997, Kenyan exchange student Steven Romandi-Menya told controversial evangelist Kent Hovind that creatures resembling pterosaurs plagued his home village, where they raided graves to feed on human corpses. While unusual, this claim mirrors reports of another flying monster, the *ropen,* reported from Papua New Guinea (see below).

Further Reading: Heuvelmans, B. *On the Track of Unknown Animals,* (London: Kegan Paul, 1995), pp. 582–97.

KUNGSTORN

The *kungstorn* ("king eagle," in Norwegian) is a bird of prey depicted in folklore throughout Europe. While not extremely large—most descriptions refer to a 6- or 7-ft. wingspan—the kungstorn surpasses any known living bird for sheer strength, snatching children and flying them off to its aerie as food for hatchlings.

One kungstorn victim was Marie Delex, a five-year-old resident of Valai, in the French Alps. In 1838, while playing with friends, Marie was grabbed by a kungstorn in full view of multiple witnesses. Dr. Félix Pouchet, director of the Museum of Natural History at Rouen, in the French district of Normandy, described the event in his book *The Universe* (1870):

> Some peasants, hearing the screams, hastened to the spot but sought in vain for the child; they found nothing but one of her shoes on the edge of a precipice. It was not until two months later that a shepherd discovered the corpse of Marie Delex, frightfully mutilated and lying upon a rock half a league [1.5 miles] from where she had been borne off.

Artist's depiction of the bird that snatched Marie Delex in 1838. (Author's collection)

Almost a century later, in June 1932, on the Norwegian island of Leka, Svanhild Hantvigsen, a three-year-old girl weighing 42 lbs., was snatched by a large bird under similar circumstances,. The bird carried Hantvigsen to a mountainside 1.2 miles from the point where she was grabbed, then left her unharmed except for rips in her clothing. Other incidents of child-snatching by large eagles were reported from Turkey in June 1937, and from Syria in February 1953.

Three European birds are known to rival the kungstorn in size. They include:

- The golden eagle, found throughout most of the Northern Hemisphere. The largest specimen on record stood 40 in. tall, weighed 20 lbs., and had a wingspan of 7 ft., 11 in.
- The white-tailed eagle, known across Eurasia, though driven nearly to extinction before the 1980s. Large specimens may stand 35 in. tall when perched at rest, with a record wingspan of 8 ft., 2 in. and a top weight of 12 lbs.
- The Eurasian eagle-owl, a large species of horned owl with a record 7-ft. wingspan and a maximum official weight of 9 lbs.

All three birds are hunters, but ornithologists insist that their ability to carry heavy prey is strictly limited. Eagle-owls are known to kill foxes and fawns weighing nearly three

times their own weight, but any prey over 7 lbs. is eaten where it falls. Most experts deny that eagles can lift any object beyond their own weight, and an experiment performed in 1940 found that a golden eagle with 4-lb. weights tied to each leg "could hardly fly at all."

Does Europe harbor some species of raptor still unknown to science? Or, can some birds lift weights far beyond those acknowledged by experts? There seems to be no doubt that several children have been carried off by large birds still unidentified. The mystery remains unsolved.

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MOTHMAN

During the year between November 1966 and November 1967, residents of West Virginia and Ohio reported multiple encounters with a large winged creature which the media nicknamed "Mothman." Descriptions varied, but most witnesses described a being 5–7 ft. tall and "much broader than a man," with a 10-ft. wingspan and eyes that glowed red in the dark. It seemed to fly without flapping its wings, yet traveled at startling speeds, keeping pace with cars driven at 70–100 mph. Less graceful on the ground, the creature waddled when it walked and made shrill sounds compared to a "squeaky fan belt."

Mothman was seen at least 21 times during its year of activity, including 12 sightings by multiple witnesses and one case where two flying creatures were seen together. While it ranged at will along the Ohio River Valley, the majority of sightings occurred around Point Pleasant, West Virginia and that town's abandoned explosives dump from World War II, known as the TNT Area. The TNT Area was a popular nocturnal spot for lovers, but several Mothman sightings also occurred in daylight.

The first known Mothman witnesses were two young married couples from Point Pleasant, Steve and Mary Mallette and David and Linda Scarberry. On the night of November 15, 1966, while driving past the TNT Area, they saw two red lights near an abandoned generator plant. A second look revealed that the lights were luminous eyes, belonging to a figure "shaped like a man, but bigger, maybe six and a half or seven feet tall, with big wings folded against its back." They fled, but the Mothman pursued them, easily keeping up with their car as it topped 100 mph. on the highway leading to Point Pleasant.

Armed locals searched the TNT Area on November 16 and found nothing unusual, but the sightings continued. That night, three adults saw the Mothman while driving past the same spot. Four more witnesses glimpsed the creature on November 24 and described it to sheriff's deputies. Two days later, Ruth Foster saw the beast on her front lawn in Charleston, West Virginia. Three days later it surfaced in Mason and St. Albans, West Virginia and was seen by three more witnesses.

Disaster struck Point Pleasant on December 15, 1967, when the Silver Bridge collapsed into the Ohio River, claiming 46 lives. Investigators blamed metal fatigue in one of the bridge's suspension chains, but some Point Pleasant residents believed that the Mothman was a living omen of doom, whose visits predicted, or caused, the tragedy. Author John Keel seemed to support that view in his book *The Mothman Prophecies* (1975), which linked Mothman sightings to UFO reports, poltergeist activity, and other strange occurrences around Point Pleasant. A film made from that book, released in 2002, depicted

Mothman frightened West Virginia residents in the mid-1960s. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

the Mothman as a supernatural being with psychic powers who tried to warn locals of the impending bridge collapse.

Skeptics suggest that Mothman witnesses actually saw large birds known to science, exaggerating their size and speed out of fear, or from a simple desire for attention. Suspects include the sandhill crane (which may stand nearly 4 ft. tall, with a 7-ft. wingspan), the turkey vulture (up to 32 in. tall, with a 6-ft. wingspan), and various large owls. Cryptozoologist Mark Hall believes that the Mothman was, in fact, a member of the unknown giant owl species that Hall dubs "Bighoot" (see above).

Since 2003, Hall's friend and sometime coauthor, Loren Coleman, has penned various articles describing a "Mothman death list," including persons linked to the West Virginia sightings (sometimes only remotely) who have died since December 1967. Coleman starts with victims of the Silver Bridge collapse, then names 38 others who died between 1968 and 2005. The long (and unconvincing) list includes, among others, renowned author Ivan Sanderson (cancer, 1973); television journalist Fred Freed (heart attack, 1974); author D. Scott Rogo (murdered in California, 1990); conspiracy theorist Jim Keith (during knee surgery, 1999); Keith's publisher, Ron Bonds (food poisoning, 2001); film producer Ted Demme (drug-related heart attack, 2002); Ted Tannenbaum, executive producer of *The Mothman Prophecies* (cancer, 2002); Robert Stack, film star and host of

TV's *Unsolved Mysteries* (heart failure, 2003); and Mark Chorvinsky, publisher of *Strange Magazine* (cancer, 2005).

A Mothman statue presently stands in Point Pleasant, where the creature's memory draws tourists. Meanwhile, witnesses around the world claim sightings of similar unidentified flying creatures at or near the scene of various disasters, including:

- Mexico City's earthquake of September 19, 1985, which killed 9,000 people, injured 30,000, and left 100,000 homeless.
- The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant meltdown near Pripyat, Ukraine, on April 26, 1986. The initial explosion killed 30 victims, while another 56 deaths were directly linked to radiation poisoning or cancer caused by exposure to radioactive material. Authorities estimated 600,000 more people were "heavily exposed," resulting in at least 4,000 later deaths.
- The "9/11" terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Various reports posted on the Internet claim sightings of a Mothman-type creature above New York City's World Trade Center (demolished by two hijacked airplanes) and in Pennsylvania (where a third airliner crashed while passengers fought with its hijackers.

Further Reading: Keel, J. *The Mothman Prophecies*. (New York: Saturday Review, 1975).

OLITAU

Naturalist Ivan Sanderson (1911–73) experienced many adventures in his travels around the world. In 1932, during the same African expedition that produced a sighting of a supposed living dinosaur (see section 3), Sanderson and a companion met another unknown creature in the Assumbo Mountains of Cameroon.

It was near dusk, and Sanderson was hunting along a river near his party's camp. He shot a large fruit bat and it fell into the water; Sanderson went in to retrieve it. He slipped on wet rocks, splashed into the current, and was struggling toward the bank when he heard his friend shout, "Look out!" Raising his head, Sanderson saw "a black thing the size of an eagle" skimming toward him, a few feet above the water. "I had only a glimpse of its face," Sanderson later wrote, "yet that was quite sufficient, for its lower jaw hung open and bore a semicircle of pointed white teeth set about their own width apart from each other."

Sanderson ducked underwater again while his companion fired at the creature and missed. Frightened but curious, the two men waited to see if it would return. Sanderson wrote:

> And just before it became too dark to see, it came again, hurtling back down the river, its teeth chattering, the air "shss-shssing" as it was cleft by the great, black, dracula-like wings. We were both off-guard, my gun was unloaded, and the brute made straight for George. He ducked. The animal soared over him and was at once swallowed up in the night.

Sanderson asked his native guides about the creature. They referred to it as *olitau*, and fled the camp on learning that it had been seen nearby. Recalling the incident later, Sanderson estimated that the olitau had a 12-ft. wingspan. Convinced that it was a mammal, he called it "the granddaddy of all bats."

The largest known bats are members of the Old World family *Pteropodidae*, commonly known as fruit bats or flying foxes. Earth's largest known species is the rare, giant golden-crowned flying fox, also known as the golden-capped fruit bat, found only on the Philippine island of Mindanao. Some specimens have 5-ft. wingspans and weigh up to 3 lbs., still much smaller than Sanderson's olitau.

The largest bat known in Africa is a more common species, the hammer-headed or big-lipped bat. Like the olitau, this species lives in swamps and forests along rivers, where it dines on fruit including mangos, bananas, and guavas. The largest documented specimen of a hammer-headed bat boasted a 38-in. wingspan and weighed 13 ounces. Male hammer-headed bats have extremely large heads (hence their name) and produce loud honking calls in flight. Their fur is generally brown or gray, with a distinct white collar extending from shoulder to shoulder.

Clearly, if Sanderson's olitau was a bat, it must represent a new species. Native tribesmen had their own name for the creature, which would be unlikely for a single, short-lived freak four times the size of other members from its species. No such living giant bats are known to science, but March 2008 brought an announcement that paleontologists working in Egypt had discovered fossils of a bat species presumed extinct for some 34 million years. No measurements were published, but researchers described the newly discovered species as "a giant among bats; though weighing in at less than a half-pound, it is one of the largest fossil bats ever discovered."

Dr. Karl Shuker suggests that the olitau may be identical—or at least closely related—to the Javan ahool, while other researchers think it is not a bat at all, but rather a flying reptile similar to kongamato (see "kongamato"). Ivan Sanderson insisted that the creature was a mammal, but without a specimen in hand, the case remains unproved.

Further Reading: Sanderson, T. *Investigating the Unexplained*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 39–44; Shuker, K., *The Beasts that Hide from Man*, (New York: Paraview, 2003), pp. 84–107.

OWLMAN

Owlman is best known in the United States as a fictional super-villain created by DC Comics authors in 1964 as an antagonist for Batman. It may surprise readers to learn that reports of a supposed real-life Owlman predate the comic character's appearance by 169 years—and that its range extends from Canada to Great Britain.

The first known mention of a living, breathing owlman appears in a Canadian settler's diary from 1798, describing a church on the outskirts of York (now a part of Toronto, Ontario) that was haunted by a man—or his ghost—capable of transforming himself into a gigantic owl. Several newspapers carried reports of the creature in 1811, relating descriptions from farmers and servants in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, who saw "a kind of winged man with tiny features, save for huge luminous eyes." More than 100 sightings of the Ontario Owlman were logged during the 19th century, nearly all describing a thin male figure with wings either sprouting from its back or taking the place of normal arms. Seen most often after sundown, the creature haunted graveyards and lonely tracts of forest.

Canadian skeptics insist that Ontario's owlman witnesses either lied about their encounters or mistook normal owls for some kind of supernatural creature. More fanciful explanations suggest that owlman was a trapper cursed by an aboriginal shaman for attacking

the shaman's daughter, or that the creature was spawned by the forbidden coupling of a Catholic priest and a nun. Some modern theorists propose that owlman is—or was—an extraterrestrial creature stranded on Earth, driven mad by close contact with inferior human beings.

Further west, in British Columbia, native tribesmen reported attacks by ferocious "Owl Woman Monsters" known as *Tah-tah Kle'-ah* during 1918. Witnesses claimed that the five winged creatures were ogres—and sisters, in fact—who stood taller than normal humans and devoured anyone they could catch. Author Neil Arnold suggests that the stories may refer to a family of rogue Sasquatches, but that theory leaves the wings unexplained. In any case, tribesmen say that all five owl women were hunted and killed around the time World War I ended.

The Owlman—or its legend—crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1926, turning up in southwestern England's Cornwall region. On June 4, 1926, the *Cornish Echo* reported that two young boys had been attacked by "a very peculiar, very large and very aggressive feathered thing" in the countryside between Mount Hawke and Porthowan. Their screams summoned adults who killed the creature after a furious struggle, but no one could identify the predator or even verify that it had been a bird.

Another 50 years passed before the Melling sisters, 12-year-old June and 9-year-old Vicky, saw a large man with wings in place of arms hovering over a church in Mawnan, Cornwall, on April 17, 1976. No adults saw the creature, but June and Vicky were so frightened that their parents canceled the remainder of their Easter vacation and rushed home to Preston, in Lancashire. British showman Anthony "Doc" Shiels was first to report the sightings.

Two more girls, 14-year-olds Sally Chapman and Barbara Perry, allegedly saw the Mawnan Owlman on July 3, 1976. They were camped out alone near the church at 10:00 P.M., when a strange hissing sound drew their attention. In later interviews with Anthony Shiels, Chapman said the creature "was like a big owl with pointed ears, as big as a man. The eyes were red and glowing. At first I thought it was someone dressed up, playing a joke, trying to scare us. I laughed at it, we both did, then it went up in the air and we both screamed. When it went up you could see its feet were like pincers."

Perry told Shiels, "It's true. It was horrible, a nasty owl-face with big ears and big red eyes. It was covered in gray feathers. The claws on its feet were black. It just flew straight up and disappeared in the trees."

Before Shiels interviewed these witnesses, two more girls saw the owlman on July 4, 1976 at the same location. Jane Goodman and her sister, like the Mellings, were on a vacation in Cornwall when they met the flying monstrosity. Jane described it as follows, in a letter to the *Falmouth Packet:*

> It was in the trees standing like a full-grown man, but the legs bent backwards like a bird's. It saw us and quickly jumped up and rose straight up through the trees. My sister and I saw it very closely before it rose up. It has red slanting eyes and a very large mouth. The feathers are silvery gray and so are his body and legs, the feet are like big black crab's claws. We were frightened at the time. It was so strange, like something from a horror film. After the thing went up there were crackling sounds in the treetops for ages. Our mother thinks we made it all up just because we read about these things, but that is not true. We really saw the bird-man, though it could have been somebody playing a trick in very good costume and make-up. But how could it rise up like that? If we imagined it, then we both imagined it at the same time.

Two years later, on June 4, 1978, a 16-year-old girl reported seeing "a monster like a devil flying up through the trees near old Mawnan Church." On August 2 of that year, three French girls touring Mawnan were frightened by something "very big, like a great big furry bird" outside the church. They said it was white, with "a gaping mouth and big round eyes." When seen, it was "up in a tree, then went up higher and disappeared."

Some critics claim that the whole owlman episode of 1976–78 was a hoax conducted by Doc Shiels, or that individual hoaxters were encouraged to fabricate sightings after Shiels reported the Melling sisters' claims in April 1976. Suspicion of Shiels—a professional magician born in 1938—was encouraged in May 1977, when he produced a remarkable color photo of an apparent long-necked dinosaur rising from the depths of Scotland's Loch Ness. That photo was so clear and so dramatic that skeptics immediately branded it a fraud. Today, it is widely dismissed as a fake, sometimes labeled "the Loch Ness Muppet." Shiels himself, when interviewed by author Graham McEwan in 1985, maintained that he was "baffled" by the owlman incidents.

Four years after that interview, in 1989, a young man and his girlfriend were strolling near Mawnan Church when they saw a winged figure "about five feet tall. . . . The legs had high ankles and the feet were large and black with two huge 'toes' on the visible side. The creature was gray with brown and the eyes definitely glowed." The last reported owlman sighting in Cornwall occurred in 1995, when a lone tourist from Chicago saw a "man-bird with a ghastly face, a wide mouth, glowing eyes and pointed ears." It flew by means of "clawed wings."

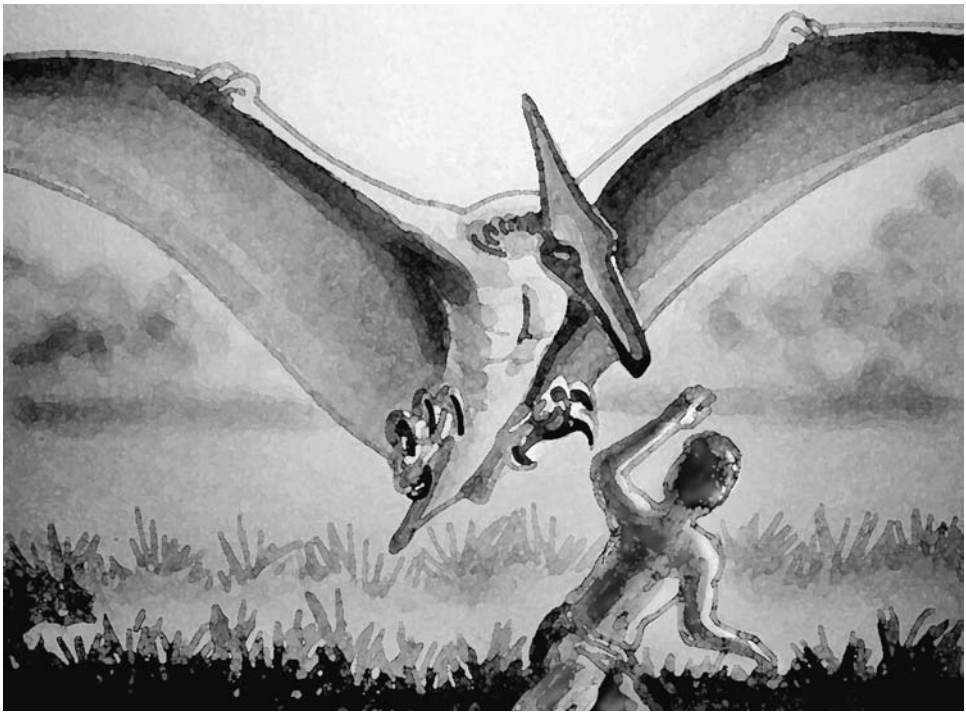
If the Mawnan owlman was not a hoax, then what was it? The most likely suspect known to science is a Eurasian eagle owl, which may boast a 6-ft. wingspan. The largest specimen on record, however, stood only 29 in. tall and tipped the scales at 9 lbs., hardly the size of a man. In 1989, British authors Colin and Janet Bord suggested that the owlman may have been an exotic bird, species unknown, that had escaped from a private collection.

Further Reading: Downes, J. *The Owlman and Others*. (Bideford, North Devon: CFZ Press, 2006).

ROPEN

In 1999, cryptozoologist William Gibbons announced the discovery of a new cryptid, the *ropen* ("demon flyer"), reported in Melanesia. Gibbons based his initial report on statements from two unnamed missionaries in Papua New Guinea who described a large flying reptile said to live in mountain caves and hunt around lakes. Two years later, Gibbons supplied Dr. Karl Shuker with more detailed information, claiming that natives of the region actually recognized *two* flying animals unknown to modern science.

The first creature, identified by Gibbons as the "true" ropen, apparently lives only on the islands of Rambutyo and Umboi, lying between New Guinea and New Ireland. Witnesses describe the animal as reptilian, with a wingspan of 3–4 ft., long jaws filled with sharp teeth, and a slender tail tipped with a diamond-shaped flange. That description matches *Rhamphorhynchus*, a small pterosaur from the Jurassic period, presumed extinct for 145 million years. Tribesmen on Rambutyo and Umboi say that their ropen sometimes snatches fish from open boats, and also raids graves to devour human bodies—both traits shared by Africa's mysterious kongamato (see "Kongamato").



New Guinea natives fear the ropen as a predator and grave-robber. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

A much larger beast, known by New Guinea's aboriginal tribes as *duah* (also "demon flyer"), has a 20-ft. wingspan and a bony crest on the back of its head. It thus resembles *Pteranodon*, a pterosaur of the Cretaceous period (ending 65 million years ago), whose largest species had a 30-ft. wingspan. William Gibbons claims that one of his unnamed missionaries saw a duah soaring over a New Guinea lake in 1995, while the other glimpsed one resting at the mouth of a cave. Native witnesses say that when the duah flies at night, its chest flashes with some kind of internal light. Some tribesmen refer to the lights as *indava*.

Since the ropen is a relatively new discovery—at least for authors in the West—it has excited widespread comment. After hearing of the beasts from William Gibbons, Dr. Shuker discovered a letter written to the journal *Ancient American* in 2000 by Minnesota resident Robert Helfinstine. That letter described a scientific expedition to Papua New Guinea in 1994 during which members collected native testimony on the ropen/duah, its glowing chest, and its grave-robbing habits. One tribesman claimed that he had found a ropen sleeping in the forest and tied its leg to a log, but the animal woke and flew away, trailing the log behind it.

Another adventurer, Brian Irwin, wrote to Dr. Shuker in 2001 and described a recent trip to Papua New Guinea and neighboring islands. Natives of Rambutyo and Umboi told Irwin that ropens were common through the 1970s, often seen flying in groups, but that their numbers had thinned near the end of the 20th century. A policeman on Umboi claimed that at least one ropen lived atop Mount Bel, but Irwin failed to find it. Another witness, the headmaster of a school on Manus Island (north of Papua New Guinea), told

Irwin he had seen a ropen perched in a tree on Goodenough Island, east of New Guinea in the Solomon Sea.

Josh Gates and his team from the Sci-Fi Channel's *Destination Truth* went hunting ropens on Papua New Guinea in 2007. They entered caves where ropens were said to live, but found nothing, then videotaped unidentified lights in the sky after nightfall. Native guides insisted that the lights belonged to ropens, but zoologists and photographic experts in California could not identify the objects.

Whatever the ropen or duah may be, there is no doubt that New Guinea holds secrets in store for those willing to visit. In December 2005, members of Conservation International found dozens of new species in the island's Foja Mountains, including 21 new species of frog and a previously unknown mammal, the golden-mantled tree kangaroo. Bruce Beehler, co-leader of the team, said of the Foja range, "It's as close to the Garden of Eden as you're going to find on Earth." Two years later, an expedition led by scientists from Louisiana State University found 10 more species of reptiles and amphibians unknown to science.

Further Reading: Shuker, K. "Flying Graverobbers." *Fortean Times* 154 (February 2002): 48–49.

THUNDERBIRDS

Native American mythology from coast to coast is filled with tales of giant birds that hunted men and larger animals, including whales snatched from the sea and dropped on rocky mountain peaks to kill them. The massive thunderbirds were known by many different names: *Cullona* in New Brunswick, *Met'co* in Labrador, *Mu-tugh-o-wik* to the Inuit, *Binesi* among the Algonquians, *Tlanuwa* to the Cherokee, *Tse'na'hale* by the Navaho, *Nunyenunc* to the Shonshoni, *Chequah* to the Potawatomi, *Yel'-lo-kin* among the Southern Mitwok, and so on.

French explorer Jacques Marquette was the first European to record aboriginal thunderbird legends. In 1673, he discovered cliff paintings of a winged monster called *piasa* etched on limestone cliffs above the Mississippi River, near the site of present-day Alton, Illinois. The stylized creatures, in Marquette's words, were "as large as a calf, with horns on the head like a deer, a fearful look, red eyes, bearded like a tiger, the face somewhat like a man's, the body covered with scales."

Verbal descriptions of the thunderbirds, however, logged by witnesses from the 17th to the 21st century, describe birds resembling eagles many times the record size acknowledged by science. Those reports include the following:

- Englishman John Josselyn (1638–75) described "a monstrous great Bird . . . four times as big as a Goshawk" (record wingspan 4 ft., 2 in.), dwelling in New Hampshire's Ossipee Mountains.
- Frontiersman Daniel Boone (1734–1820) reported a five-year-old boy carried off by a thunderbird in the Ohio-Kentucky region.
- Mountain man Jim Bridger (1804–81) claimed that a "giant bird, too big for either an eagle or a vulture," had snatched one of his mules in the Rocky Mountains.
- September 1868: James Henry shot "a new and comparatively unknown bird" in Kentucky. It weighed 104 lbs. and had a 15-ft. wingspan. A local newspaper claimed

the species was "almost entirely extinct—the last one having been seen in the State of New York during the year 1812."

- Autumn 1868: An eight-year-old boy in Tippah County, Mississippi died after an eagle snatched him from a schoolyard, then dropped him back to Earth.
- January 1870: James Pepples killed a black monster bird with a 7-ft. wingspan in Lincoln County, Kentucky.
- March 1892: Travelers in New Mexico shot "a big bald eagle" as it carried a one-year-old child 50 ft. above the ground.
- 1892: Loggers in Cameron County, Pennsylvania, saw a flock of birds resembling vultures with 16-ft. wingspans.
- September 1894: Hunters from Elizabethtown, New York, saw a bird "as big as a cow," with wings "like barn doors."
- February 1895: Miners in Webster County, West Virginia, were terrorized by a "feathered monster" that carried off sheep and a 10-year-old child. A sheriff's deputy said the bird had an 18-ft. wingspan and a body the size of a man's.
- April 1922: Hiram Cranmer saw a bird with a 35-ft. wingspan circle his home, south of Coudersport, Pennsylvania.
- 1933: A huge eagle mauled three members of a family in southern California before they killed it with an axe. The doctor who treated their wounds verified the bird's 24-ft. wingspan.
- 1937: A large bird snatched a four-year-old girl while her family picked berries in McKean County, Pennsylvania.
- 1937: An Arizona pilot claims a near-collision with a bird whose wingspan exceeded 30 ft.
- 1940: Robert Lyman saw a bird with a 20-ft. wingspan near Coudersport, Pennsylvania.
- 1941: 75-year-old Barney Pluff was reportedly killed and devoured by a giant bird in Pennsylvania's Black Forest.
- 1944: Japanese Americans confined to a California internment camp blamed a giant bird for the disappearance of seven adult inmates. While listed as escapees, the missing men never rejoined their families after World War II.
- 1944: Texas newspapers reported a gigantic bird wading and flying around Possum Kingdom Lake, in Palo Pinto County.
- January to April 1948: Multiple sightings of giant birds were logged from Alton, Illinois, to Overland and St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1950: A hunter in Lee County, Kentucky fired on a bird with a 20-ft. wingspan.
- February 1954: Gladie Bills and her teenage daughter saw six birds "the size of airplanes" circling over Hillsboro, Oregon.
- March 1957: Sightings of a bird with a wingspan of 25–30 ft. emerged from Clinton County, Pennsylvania over a three-week period.
- May 1961: A New York pilot reported that a bird the size of his Piper Cub followed the plane for 10 minutes, over the Hudson River Valley.

- July 1962: Witnesses in Clinton County, Pennsylvania, saw a huge bird skimming over local creeks.
- May 1968: Four witnesses saw three birds with wingspans of 15–20 ft. flying over Galesburg, Illinois.
- 1969: John Boyle and his wife saw a bird with an estimated 75-ft. wingspan in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. In a separate incident, three road workers saw the bird carry off a fawn.
- 1970: Two residents of Noorvik, Alaska, saw a bird "bigger than a Twin Otter airplane," which has a 58-ft. wingspan.
- 1970: Hunters in Johnson County, Kentucky found a large abandoned bird's nest, littered with 18-in. feathers, atop a cliff.
- October 1970: Judith Dingler saw a bird that "reminded her of an airplane" in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania.
- June 1971: Two witnesses reported a bird with an 18-ft. wingspan in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania.
- September 1972: Residents of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania saw a bird "the size of a Piper Cub" on three different days.
- 1973: Judith Diliberto saw a bird with a wingspan of 25–30 ft. fly over her farm in Franklin County, New York.
- September 1974: Three witnesses in western Québec reported separate sightings of a bird that stood 4 ft. tall at rest. Fearing ridicule, they refused to speculate on its wingspan.
- October 1974: Multiple sightings of a bird with a 15-ft. wingspan emerged from Potter County, Pennsylvania.
- October 1975: Lloyd King saw a giant bird in Walnut Creek, California. He described it as 5 ft. tall when standing, with a 15-ft. wingspan.
- December 1976: Multiple witnesses reported a giant bird flying around Anderson County, Texas over a three-week period. They estimated its wingspan at 10–12 ft.
- May 1977: Residents of Boone County, Kentucky reported that a "very big, big bird" had snatched a 5-lb. beagle puppy and carried it for 600 yards before dropping it into a pond. The dog required stitches for its wounds.
- July 1977: Two huge birds raided a yard in Lawndale, Illinois where children were playing. One lifted 10-year-old Marlon Lowe and carried him 40 ft. before dropping him in his front yard. Four days later, a postman saw two birds snatch a pig from a farm in Tazewell County, Illinois.
- August 1977: Terry McCormick saw a bird as large as a Piper Cub in Clinton County, Pennsylvania.
- Summer 1978: Jessie Ross saw "a prehistoric eagle" perched on rocks near Arco, Idaho. It stood 5 ft. tall at rest and had a wingspan of 20–22 ft.
- 1988: A resident of Brookfield, Wisconsin saw a bird with a wingspan of 12–15 ft.
- June 2002: Two birds with 12-ft. wingspans were reported from Wyoming County, Pennsylvania.

- October 2002: Villagers in Dillingham County, Alaska claimed multiple sightings of a bird with a 14-ft. wingspan.
- November 2007: The History Channel's *MonsterQuest* program aired a videotape of a supposed giant bird in flight, but nothing in the footage provided satisfactory scale for determination of size.

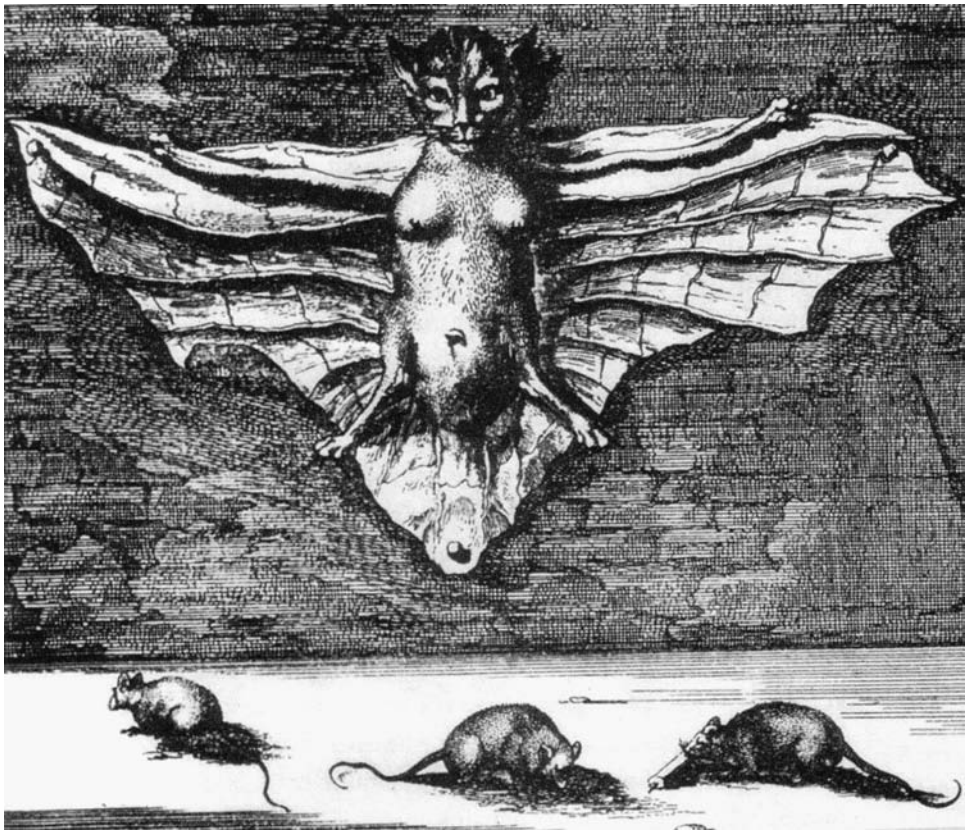
While birds of the prehistoric family *Teratornithidae* attained wingspans of 26 ft., no birds approaching the size of larger reported thunderbirds are recognized by science. North America's largest known bird is the endangered California condor, none of which are known to live outside of California and Arizona. Only 147 specimens are known to exist in the wild, and none exceed a 9-ft. wingspan. The Andean condor is slightly larger, but none live in the wild outside of South America. North America's bald and golden eagles boast wingspans slightly exceeding 7 ft., but most ornithologists insist that they can only lift a small fraction of their own 14- to 20-lb. body weight. The thunderbirds sighted throughout American history remain unidentified.

Further Reading: Hall, M. *Thunderbirds!* (New York: Paraview, 2004).

WINGED CATS

Over the past six centuries, reports of cats with wings, some capable of flying, others simply burdened with deformities, have been logged around the world. In modern times, at least 20 winged cats have been photographed, and another has been caught on videotape. Logical explanations address most of the documented cases, but some remain unexplained. Cases on file include the following:

- Italian explorer Marco Polo toured the Far East from 1271–95 and published a description of a leopard-sized predator called the "cat-a-mountain," capable of flying after its prey. Today, most historians dismiss Polo's report as a product of imagination or confusion of known big cats with a large, possibly unknown bat species.
- 1667: A German priest, Fr. Athanasius Kircher, drew a bat-winged cat supposed to consort with European witches.
- June 1842: American author Henry Thoreau described a winged cat caught on Gillian Baker's farm, near Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. He wrote: "she was of a dark brownish-grey colour, with a white spot on her throat, and white feet, and had a large bushy tail like a fox; that in the winter the fur grew thick and flattened out along her sides, forming strips ten or twelve inches long by two and a half wide, and under her chin like a muff, the upper side loose, the under matted like felt, and in the spring these appendages dropped off. They gave me a pair of her 'wings,' which I keep still. There is no appearance of a membrane about them. Some thought it was part flying squirrel or some other wild animal, which is not impossible, for, according to naturalists, prolific hybrids have been produced by the union of the marten and the domestic cat." Modern scientists consider such cross-breeding impossible.
- 1868: A British journal, *The Naturalist's Note Book*, recorded the killing in India of a flying cat known to native tribesmen as *pauca billee*. Its skin, measuring 18 in. long,



This drawing depicts a supposed flying cat, shot in India in 1868. (Author's collection)

was displayed at the Bombay Asiatic Society, whose members denied that it was any known bat.

- 1894: A cat with wings resembling a duckling's was displayed in Cambridgeshire, England. It was later stolen and shed its wings before resurfacing with new owners in Liverpool.
- 1897: The *High Peak News* of June 26 reported that a winged cat had been shot in Derbyshire, England. Witnesses said the animal flapped its wings to run faster than normal.
- 1899: Reports from London described a kitten with wings resembling a chicken's, 6–8 in. long, sprouting from its back. The cat died when its wings were removed.
- 1933: A cat with 6-in. wings was caught in Oxford, England and displayed at the local zoo. The wings allegedly helped it leap over long distances.
- 1936: A cat with wings 6 in. long and 3 in. wide was found on a farm outside Portpatrick, Scotland.
- 1939: A cat with a 24-in. wingspan was displayed in a freak show at Blackpool, England.

- 1940s: Another supposed winged cat was placed on display at Ashford, England, during World War II.
- 1949: A 20-lb. cat with a 23-in. wingspan was shot in Sweden. Experts at the State Museum of Natural History blamed its condition on a skin deformity.
- 1950: A cat with "sizeable" wings was displayed at a carnival in Nottinghamshire, England.
- 1950: Newspapers in Madrid, Spain, reported that Juan Priego's cat "Angolina" had grown large wings.
- 1959: Douglas Shelton caught a winged cat near Pinesville, West Virginia. Another local claimed the cat was hers and sued to recover it. Before the case went to trial, the cat shed its wings, which proved to be matted hair.
- 1966: An apparent winged cat was killed in Alfred, Ontario, Canada. Witnesses claimed that the cat could fly and sometimes swooped to harass livestock. Professors at the nearby Kemptville Agricultural School determined that it was rabid and that its wings were snarled mats of hair.
- 1970: J.A. Sandford saw a winged cat in his neighbor's garden, in Wallingford, Connecticut. The animal shed its wings, mats of hair 5 in. long and 4 in. wide, when spring arrived.
- 1975: England's *Manchester Evening News* ran a photo of a cat with 11-in. wings that lived at a local contractor's shop in the 1960s. Employees claimed that the cat could raise and move its wings at will.
- 1986: Another case of matted hair was revealed when a cat shed its wings in Anglesey, England.
- 1995: Martin Millner claimed a winged-cat sighting in Cumbria, England.
- 1998: Witnesses in Northwood, England reported a black cat with wings 8 in. long and 4 in. wide that flapped as the cat ran.
- 2004: Villagers killed a winged cat near Kursk, in Russia's Central Federal District, believing it to be a bad omen.
- 2007: A one-year-old cat in China's Shaanxi Province grew 4-in. wings from bony lumps within one month.

Aside from cases of matted hair, which certainly produced some winged cats and may be responsible for other reports, two other explanations are normally advanced for the phenomenon. Hoaxes must be considered in the case of photographs and mounted taxidermy specimens, where wings may be attached after the cat is dead. Author Peter Dance describes one such case in *Animal Fakes and Frauds* (1976), referring to a winged cat manufactured in the 19th century and offered for sale in the early 1960s. Modern taxidermy fakes are more likely to be made as jokes or works of art, rather than with actual intent to deceive.

A second possible explanation for some winged cats is a congenital deformity producing extra vestigial legs. Those surplus limbs are often stunted, may be difficult to recognize as legs, and may be found protruding from the body in unusual positions—including the back, where a brief glance might mistake them for wings.

A third explanation, now favored by many students of the phenomena, involves a disease called cutaneous asthenia ("weak skin"), also known as *cutis elastica* ("elastic skin"). Victims of this condition suffer from deficiency of collagen, a protein that binds skin cells together, with the result that their skin may stretch to unusual length or tear from mild contact. In humans, the disease is known as Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, and produced the "rubber men" popular in sideshows of bygone decades.

Four veterinary reports of feline cutaneous asthenia were published in the 1970s, from England (1970 and 1975), New York (1974), and Pennsylvania (1977). In the Pennsylvania case, researchers examined a male cat whose skin could be stretched into wings nearly one-fourth the length of its body. When mated with four normal female cats, all of the male's kittens inherited cutaneous asthenia. Such wings, however, are incapable of flight and leave the possibility that at least some winged cats may represent a large unknown species of bat or other flying mammal.

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MYSTERY MAULERS

Throughout recorded history, humans and their domesticated animals have suffered attacks by unidentified predators that strike and disappear at will, evading traps and hunting parties, leaving witnesses dazed and frightened. In some cases, victims disappear completely. Many are mauled beyond recognition, while others loose only their blood or specific internal organs. Some killing sprees end with the death of a neighborhood dog or a recognized wild animal, but most stop as suddenly and mysteriously as they began. In bygone days, such incidents spawned tales of supernatural vampires and werewolves at large. Even now, in the enlightened 21st century, the ease with which such predators avoid capture leads some observers to speculate on demonic forces at work. Skeptics insist that all such cases are explainable in terms of wolves, coyotes, and wildcats—or, in some cases, the criminal activity of mentally unbalanced individuals or cults. The mysteries examined here remain officially unsolved.

BEAST OF BLADENBORO

Bladenboro is a small town located in Bladen County, in the southeastern corner of North Carolina. It claimed a population of 1,718 persons in 2000, but it was even smaller in December 1953—with only 1,000 residents—when a still-unidentified creature terrorized the neighborhood. The attacks began at nearby Clarkton, where a dog was mauled on December 29, then shifted to Bladenboro two nights later, when two of Johnny Vause's dogs were killed. Farmer Woodie Storms lost two dogs on January 1, 1954, described by the *Wilmington Morning Star* as "sort of eaten up."

Two more dogs were slaughtered on January 4. Their owner, Malcolm Frank, glimpsed the attacker and compared it to "a bear or panther," roughly 4 ft. long, with a "round face, shiny eyes and large teeth." Witness James Pittman saw a similar beast and chased it for a mile through the woods before he lost it. On January 6, Charles Kinlaw's wife saw the

creature in her yard, stalking toward her from 20 ft., but it vanished, leaving only catlike tracks, before Charles answered her cries with his shotgun in hand.

Mayor W. G. Fussell telephoned the news to various newspapers, hoping to gain Bladenboro "a little publicity," but reports of a vampire beast at large soon inspired full-scale panic. Fearful hunters scoured Bladen County's swamps and woods for bobcats or other predators, killing every one they found, but the Beast of Bladenboro remained elusive.

Eyewitnesses agreed that it was larger than any known bobcat, noting that it left paw prints whose depth suggested a weight of 100–150 lbs. Most witnesses said the beast had gray fur and a few mentioned runty ears. Some locals suspected a cougar, despite the fact that those cats are thought to be extinct in the eastern United States. Others thought the beast was some exotic import, perhaps an ocelot from South America.

The ocelot theory gained support after one was struck and killed by a car on State Highway 41, but the fact remained that no Bladenboro witness had described a beast with spots like an ocelot's—and the killings continued after the ocelot's death. New victims included a hog, found partially devoured, and a goat that died after its nose was bitten off.

Such injuries do not support the claims of vampirism published at the height of Bladenboro's panic, or in later years. Today, it seems that much of the vampire hysteria of 1953–54 derived from newspaper stories describing a "blood-lusty beast," while the creature's victims suffered mutilations bearing no resemblance to a tidy vampire's bite. In fact, several animals killed by the beast had their skulls "chewed and crushed."

Hunters, both amateur and professional, swarmed over Bladen County with guns and tracking dogs, but their efforts were all in vain. Drivers scooped road kill off the local highways and presented the remains to Mayor Fussell and Bladenboro's police chief. Fussell himself seemed to doubt that the beast existed, telling the *Carolina Farmer,* "The animal was about 90 percent imagination, 10 percent truth." Norman McCullough, publisher of the *Bladen Journal,* joked that if the animal was ever found, it would be wearing a sign that read: "This cat sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce."

Soon, Bladenboro residents grew tired of living in fear. Finally, Mayor Fussell took one of the several bobcats shot by hunters and hoisted it from a flagpole in town, then posed for a photo with the carcass and sent it to newspapers statewide, with a caption reading: "This is the Beast of Bladenboro."

It wasn't . . . but the killings stopped.

Even then, however, it took time for Bladenboro's panic to subside. Hurricane Hazel struck North Carolina in October 1954, flooding Bladen County's Big Swamp, and local farmers stood guard over their livestock at night, fearing the beast's return. C. A. Ludlum and his cousins guarded the family hogs, lighting bonfires to keep predators at bay, yet they still heard a large creature snarling in the nearby woods. Ludlum believes it was a cougar, saying, "Once you've heard one, you don't mistake it for anything else."

With time, the panic faded, leaving only a mystery behind, but the tale of the beast was not finished. Fifty-two years later, in September 2007, another mystery mauler visited Bolivia, North Carolina, a tiny town of 148 residents in Brunswick County 51 miles southeast of Bladenboro. Its first victim was a pit bull, killed in the yard of its owners rural home. The dog's owner buried it and woke next morning to find the carcass back in his yard, at the same location where it had been found the first time.

As in the Bladenboro case, more attacks followed. Two more pit bulls were killed, and a third survived its injuries. The veterinarian in that case described multiple "tiny wounds"

of unexplained origin. Around the same time, 170 miles to the northeast in Guilford County, goats were slain but not eaten in Greensboro and Lexington. Some reports credited the "Beast of Bolivia" with a vampiric taste for blood, but, as in 1954–55, the evidence was weak.

Authorities who examined the new beast's droppings and 3-in.-wide paw prints could not identify the animal. Some Brunswick County residents believe the predator was an escapee from the local Faircloth Zoo, a 52-acre preserve for exotic animals that closed in 2006. Before its closure, the zoo included bears, leopards, lions and tigers among its inhabitants. The zoo's former owners deny any escapes, and no evidence exists linking any of their animals to the attacks.

As in the Bladenboro case, attacks around Bolivia abruptly ceased soon after they began. In December 2007, Brunswick County Animal Services Director Richard Cooper told reporters, "The investigation is at a standstill until we get a confirmed sighting. When we have something solid to go on that's substantiated, we'll ask the Wildlife Resources Commission to get involved."

Thus far, no sightings have occurred, and the mystery remains unsolved . . . until next time.

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BEAST OF GÉVAUDAN

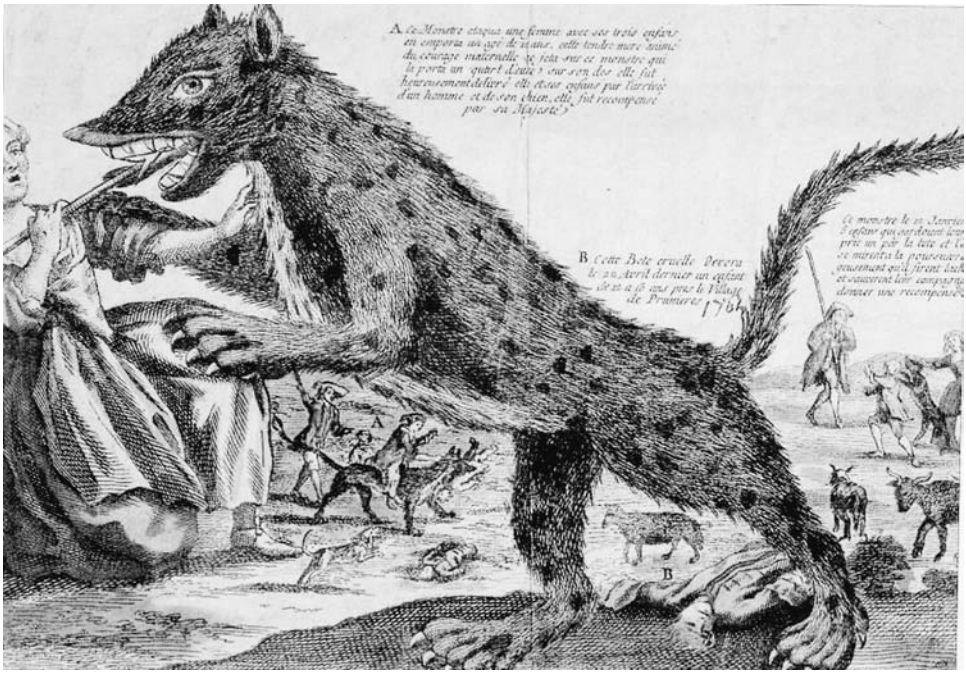
Nearly 200 years before the Beast of Bladenboro staged its first attack, an even more frightening creature rampaged through the province of Gévaudan (now Lozère), in the Margeride Mountains of south-central France. Whereas North Carolina's mystery mauler preyed on dogs and other animals, the Beast of Gévaudan preferred human flesh, claiming an uncertain number of victims between 1764 and 1767. Official reports list nearly 200 attacks, with 88 persons killed and 36 wounded, while other sources claim 306 attacks with 123 dead and 51 injured. The true figures may never be known.

Predictably, sources also disagree on when the beast's raiding began. The first known eyewitness, a woman from Langogne, told of a large, wolf-like creature charging at her from the woods. Before it could reach her, a bull intercepted the beast and drove it away. On June 30, 1764 the prowler claimed its first official victim, Jeanne Boulet, who was killed at Les Hubacs, near Langogne.

In months and years to come, the Beast of Gévaudan remained consistent, bypassing sheep and other livestock to attack human beings. It hunted by daylight and its method of killing was also peculiar, crushing and sometimes removing the heads of its victims. A majority of those it killed were women and children, but even armed men were not safe. A few reports described *two* beasts, or an adult with cubs, but most of those who lived to tell the tale referred to one ferocious predator.

In August 1764, French king Louis XV issued a "Wanted" poster on the Beast of Gévaudan. It read:

> Reward 12,000 livres [$48,000] if dead. Known as 'La Bête' but kills under three aliases. Reddish brown with dark ridged stripe down the back. Resembles wolf/hyena but big as a donkey. Long gaping jaw, 6 claws, pointy upright ears and supple furry tail—mobile like



The Beast of Gévaudan claims another victim in this 18th-century painting. (Author's collection)

a cat's and can knock you over. Cry: more like horse neighing than wolf howling. Last seen by people mostly now dead. If she approaches you please leave behind a signed copy of this poster.

The last line may have been intended as a joke, but the beast was no laughing matter for persons living within its hunting range. On September 6, 1764 it claimed another victim and was seen by a crowd of villagers who pursued it with axes, pitchforks, and scythes. Locals relaxed a bit on September 16, after a wolf was killed at Les Pradels, but the true beast returned to slay another girl at Thorts, 12 days later. Investigators accused hunters at Les Pradels of stuffing a normal wolf with various objects to make it resemble a man-eater, hoping to collect the king's reward.

The beast varied its technique on January 1, 1765, leaving victim Marie Rousset's head at Milienettes, while carrying off the rest of her corpse. Over the next six days it killed four more victims, but missed its prey on January 12, when young Jacques Portefaix and six friends fought back and drove the creature off.

Louis XV gave the children 300 livres ($1,200) and sent two professional wolf-hunters, Jean-Charles-Marc-Antoine Vaumesle d'Enneval and his son Jean-François, to slay the Beast of Gévaudan. They spent several months tracking the monster with bloodhounds, but never found it. Meanwhile, the attacks continued.

On March 9, 1765, Jeanne Jouve fought the beast barehanded to save three of her children at Fau de Brion. She lost one son and suffered many wounds herself, but rescued the other two children and received 300 livres from King Louis. That same night, the beast killed another boy at Chanaleilles.

On April 29, 1765, the beast killed a woman on her way to church in Escures. On June 21, it killed two more victims and wounded a third during a summer solstice cele-

bration. The following day, a new royal hunter—François Antoine—arrived in Gévaudan to track the creature, but the beast was not impressed. On July 21 it snatched a boy from Auvert, leaving his clothes behind "almost untorn."

Embarrassed, Antoine redoubled his efforts, and on September 21 killed a large wolf near Abbaye des Chazes. It weighed 130 pounds, prompting Antoine to tell King Louis, "We never saw a big wolf that could be compared to this one. Which is why we estimate this could be the fearsome beast that caused so much damage." Antoine stuffed the wolf and took it to Versailles, where Louis rewarded him with titles and cash, but villagers at Marsillac reported seeing the Beast of Gévaudan repeatedly from September 26–28.

On December 2, 1765, the killer struck again at la Besseyre Saint Mary, badly wounding two children. Three weeks later it killed Agnes Mourges, leaving "insufficient remains for burial." Between March and June 1766 it attacked 14 victims around Paulhac.

In July 1766, hunters killed another fierce predator at Pinols. It was quickly buried, but the local priest made sketches of it that resembled a large baboon. Whatever it was, the Beast of Gévaudan remained at large and hungry.

The monster's last official victim was an unidentified girl, killed at Dèsges on June 18, 1767. The following day, a hunter named Jean Chastel shot and killed a large predator at Sogne d'Auvers. Some authors claim that Chastel used a silver bullet, but whatever his choice of ammunition, his musket shot finally ended the Beast of Gévaudan's long killing spree.

As to *what* Chastel shot, the mystery persists. Chastel himself described the beast as a deformed wolf-like creature, and sketches of its strange jaws still exist. The carcass was crudely preserved and displayed in Gévaudan for two weeks, then sent off to a museum in Paris, where it disappeared sometime in 1810 or 1819 (reports differ). In 1767, most observers seemed to think the beast was a wolf or some kind of hybrid creature. A century later, French naturalist Gérard Ménatory and novelist Henrí Pourrat proposed a hyena, claiming that Jean Chastel's father himself kept at least one such animal in his private menagerie. In 1997, Franz Jullien claimed that he had found 18th-century museum records positively naming the beast as a striped hyena, but many researchers are still skeptical.

In addition to the wolf and hyena theories, some researchers believe the Beast of Gévaudan may have been an early serial killer, savage but completely human. That theory suffers from the fact that no unidentified human footprints were ever found at the scene of an attack, while large clawed paw prints were frequently reported. Some superstitious authors suggested that the beast was a werewolf or a "human-animal hybrid," both regarded as impossible by modern science. A film released in 2001, *Brotherhood of the Wolf,* suggests that the beast was an African lion, disguised as a monster and unleashed by religious fanatics to wreak havoc in the French countryside.

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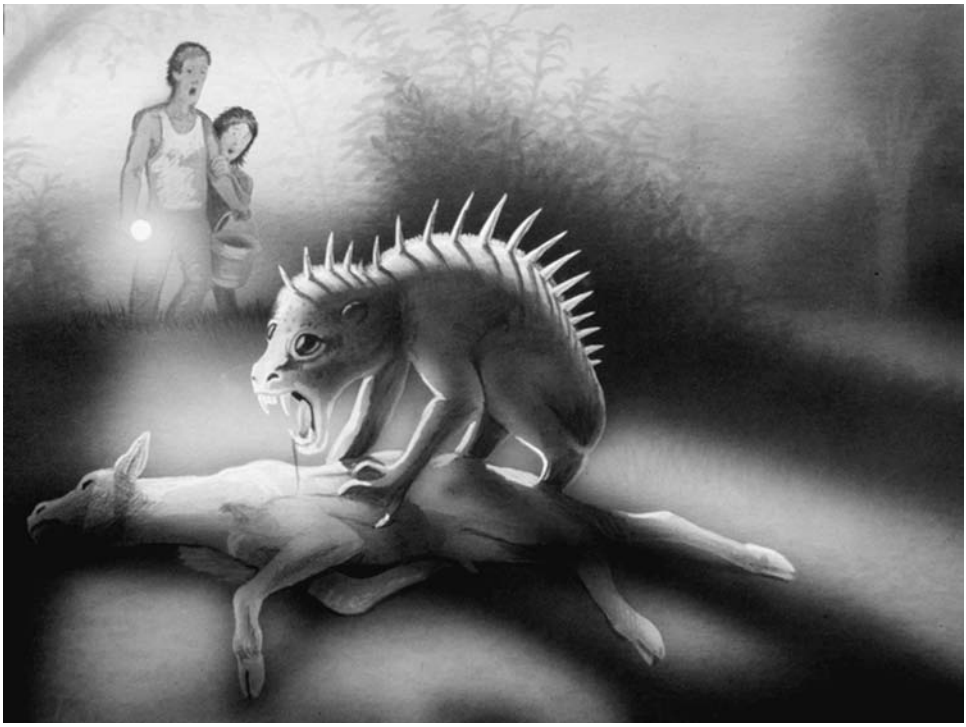
EL CHUPACABRA

The *chupacabra* (often written *chupacabras,* while remaining singular) is a mysterious predator first reported in Puerto Rico in the 1970s and now supposedly active throughout South and Central America, northward into Mexico, and parts of the United States. Between 1996 and 2008, attacks by the same or a similar creature were also reported in Spain, Portugal, Russia, and the Philippines.



The chupacabra earned its name by draining goats of blood. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

The chupacabra ("goat sucker," in Spanish) is named for its habit of drinking blood from livestock and other domestic animals. Goats were among its early victims, and remain a favorite target, but farmers have also reported attacks on pigs, sheep, cattle, horses, dogs, rabbits, geese, chickens, ducks, turkeys—and human beings. Descriptions of the creatures from eyewitnesses vary widely, as to size and form, suggesting that the attacks were actually carried out by different predators from one location to another. Several alleged chupacabras have been killed, captured, or photographed. At least in the United States, those examined by experts have been identified as dogs or coyotes suffering from mange (a skin condition causing painful rash and loss of hair).

Puerto Rico suffered its first incidents in 1975, when livestock was mauled and mutilated by a creature dubbed the "Moca Vampire." Spokesmen for the island's Agricultural Commission blamed the attacks on birds and snakes, though neither drink blood nor attack large farm animals. The first human victim, Juan Muñiz, claimed that he was attacked by a "horrible creature with feathers" in May 1975.

After 1975, the creature took a 16-year vacation, but then returned for more raids in 1991. This time, witnesses described it as apelike, while police blamed the damage on dogs.

Another four-year break followed, and was broken when attacks resumed in 1995. Reporters coined the chupacabra name after 150 sheep were drained of blood at Canóvanas, in August. Witness Madelyne Tolentino described the predator as a dark gray biped, 4 ft. tall, with skinny limbs and a row of spines or feathers down its back. Osvaldo Rosado disagreed, comparing the beast that attacked him in December 1995 to a full-grown gorilla. A third witness described the chupacabra as "a giant falcon with a human face."

Attacks in Puerto Rico have continued from the 1990s to the present day, but el chupacabra is not confined to that Caribbean island. In November 1995, attacks began in Guatemala, targeting livestock and poultry. Again, descriptions of the prowler varied: one witness compared it to a large black dog, while another described a large bat or bird. A veterinarian examined the creature's victims and ruled out raids by coyotes or wolves, suggesting an unknown winged creature with large claws.

Mexico reported its first chupacabra attacks in February 1996. Witness Benigno Cano, in Sinaloa, described a predator 35 in. tall, "with large, sharp fangs, red eyes, scales, and a dragon-like appearance." Other witnesses spoke of black hair, pointed ears, and wings. A strange humanoid with large ears attacked sheep near Payogasta in February 2001, and a policeman in Guadalupe claimed injuries from a chupacabra in January 2004.

Meanwhile, night-stalking beasts invaded the United States through southern Florida in March 1996. A Miami witness blamed a creature "neither human nor simian" for killing his chickens, while a Sweetwater resident saw an inhuman shape in her yard. T-shirts and a fast-food restaurant now display the chupacabra's likeness in Florida, but sporadic attacks on goats, sheep and poultry continue.

Spanish farmers logged their first attacks in April 1996, when 600 sheep in the Pyrenees Mountains were found drained of blood. Insurance adjustors blamed "an unknown species of predator—definitely not a wolf." One month later, 163 sheep simply vanished from a herd of 700, in what police called "the strangest theft we've ever investigated." A local prosecutor said, "They may well have been carried off upward."

In May 1996, Arizona resident José Espinoza claimed a chupacabra had invaded his home and attacked his 7-year-old son. Police investigated, reporting that Espinoza's younger child had made the various hand and footprints found in the house.

During that same month, chupacabras supposedly killed its first goat in Texas, near Brownsville. Attacks resumed six years later, and while police blamed normal predators, farmer Luis Duran told reporters, "It couldn't be a coyote because they usually fight around the house and there should be blood. If it was a wildcat, there should be wounds, but there were only marks like fingernails."

In California, also during May 1996, "a sizable, shadowy figure" attacked Roberto García in his home, creeping through an open bedroom window to bite his hand. Around the same time, a rooster was found, drained of blood.

Summer 1996 brought chupacabra reports from Costa Rica, where witness Erlina Vega claimed a winged creature with "a small face and eyes" tried to snatch her from her yard. A nearby farmer's cow also died from blood loss.

The chupacabras crossed the Atlantic Ocean again in September 1996, draining blood from Portuguese sheep through single puncture wounds in their necks. A biologist blamed the attacks on "an extremely intelligent and experienced wolf," which apparently had only one fang in its mouth.

In Brazil, on a single night in May 1999, the chupacabra reportedly killed 11 pigs and one dog, leaving less than "a single spoonful of blood" in its victims' veins. The farmer who suffered that loss had 11 other dogs, but none of them barked during the nocturnal attack.

July 1999 brought reports of vampire attacks from Argentina, where 40 sheep died from blood loss in one night. Raids continued through April 2002, with authorities reporting that the prowlers left "no traces which pointed to the presence of dogs, foxes or game."

Chile has suffered more losses to chupacabra than any nation outside Puerto Rico, with hundreds of animals and domestic birds killed between April 2000 and October 2003. Reports from Chile also claim that six unidentified predators were killed or captured by authorities between May 2000 and November 2001. One, never produced for public study, was described as "a strange giant bat" with a wingspan of 5 ft. 5 in. Another, photographed and dissected by veterinarians, measured only 12 in. long. Chilean researchers complain that members of unidentified agencies have bribed or threatened chupacabra witnesses into silence.

Another supposed chupacabra was shot in Nicaragua, after killing 70 goats and sheep in August 2000. Farmer Jorge Talavera sent its remains to the National Autonomous University for study, where reporters described it as having "yellow hair on its short tail, large eye-sockets, soft skin like that of a bat, large claws and fangs, and a crest on its main vertebrae." Oddly, the official report—delayed until January 2002—declared: "This is a common dog. There are no fangs or anything that could suck blood."

In July 2004, a Texas rancher shot a hairless, dog-like creature that attacked his livestock. Although touted as a chupacabra, it proved to be a coyote with mange. Two more mangy coyotes were trapped in the same area in October 2004. Three more similar coyotes were found in August 2007, at Cuero, Texas, where farmers reported chickens drained of blood over the past 12 months.

Russia has no coyotes, but some unknown predator drained at least 30 sheep and 32 turkeys of blood around Moscow between March 2005 and April 2006. Internet reports claim that witnesses "were able to describe the chupacabra," but no details were provided.

Farmers near Boyaca, Colombia reported more than 300 sheep killed in May 2007—and they caught the supposed beast responsible. It was packed off to Colombia's National University for study, but no results have yet been published.

Finally, in January 2008, farmers in the Philippine province of Capiz, on Panay Island, claimed that the chupacabra had attacked their chickens. The elusive beast was described as resembling a dog.

What is the chupacabra? Ed Lavandera, a CNN reporter, has described it as "the Bigfoot of Latino culture," suggesting that the beast is mythical. The witnesses who have lost animals or suffered wounds themselves in close encounters with the creature disagree. Certainly, the evidence of animals and birds killed by the hundreds (maybe thousands) since the 1970s proves that *something* has happened. Published theories include:

- *Known predators,* including feral dogs, coyotes, wolves, weasels, etc. The obvious drawback is that none of these animals simply drink blood without eating their prey.
- *Predatory "merbeings,"* proposed by authors Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe in 1999, although no reports thus far describe the chupacabra as living in water.
- *Aliens from space,* apparently proposed because some descriptions of the chupacabra match those of short, thin-limbed UFO occupants popularly known as "grays."
- *Vampires,* either supernatural creatures of legend or an unknown species of vampire bat much larger than those presently known from Latin America. Blood-drinking bats known to science consume only small amounts from their animal hosts, and their bite is rarely fatal unless they carry rabies.

- *A failed experiment,* presumably conducted at some secret laboratory for reasons yet unclear, resulting in the escape or deliberate release of a genetically engineered predator.
- *Creatures from another dimension,* which invade our world for food, or, as theorized by one Internet writer, "in order to prevent the chemical crisis that caused them to evolve into chupacabras."

In passing, we should note that vampire-style attacks on livestock did not begin in 20th-century Puerto Rico. For nearly 100 years, between 1810 and 1906, many sheep in England and Scotland were killed by still-unknown predators that bit the jugular veins of their victims and sucked or otherwise removed enough blood to cause death. Angry farmers throughout the British countryside shot various dogs and supposed wolves (officially extinct in Britain by 1743). None of the killings prevented new attacks, which finally ended as mysteriously as they had begun.

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MAROZI

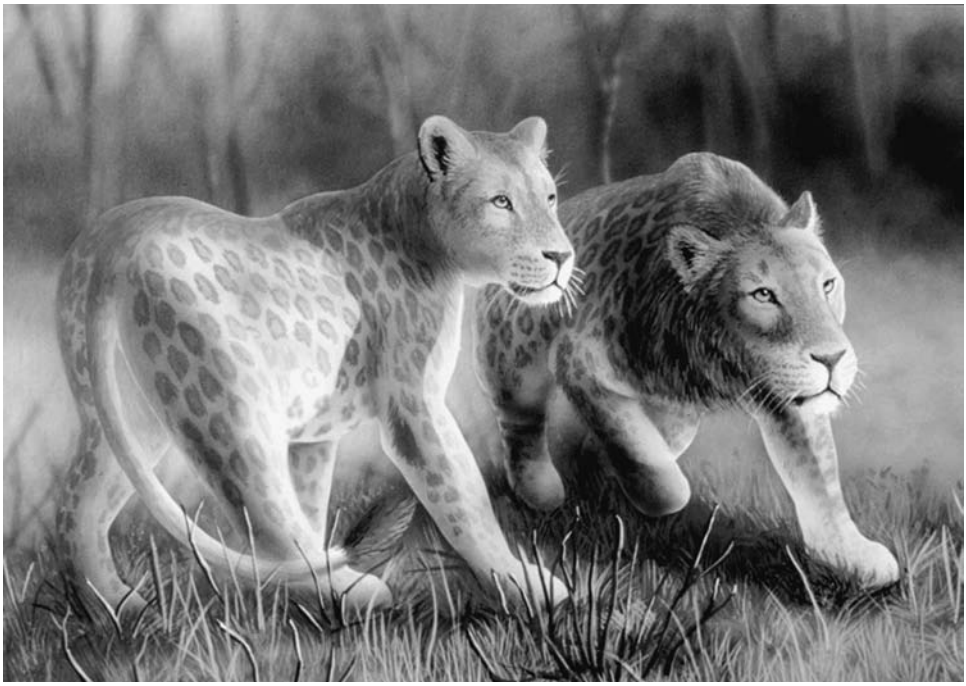
Reports of spotted lions seen in Africa span more than 100 years. In Kenya, the creatures are known as *marozi,* but their range is much wider, and their local names more numerous. In Cameroon, they are called *bung bung;* in the Central African Republic, *batanga;* in Ethiopia, *abasambo;* in Rwanda, *ikimizi;* and in various parts of Uganda, *kiiseego, kitalargo, ntarargo,* or *uruturangwe*. Local descriptions of the strange cats also vary as to size and the background color of their coats, but all witnesses agree that their hides display prominent spots. Based on this common factor, Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans proposed the scientific name *Panthera leo maculatus* ("stained lion," in Latin), but most zoologists reject classification of a new species without a specimen in hand.

By any name, spotted lions are said to be deadly. One specimen in Uganda's Kinkinzi region reportedly killed 100 native herdsmen, bypassing their sheep and goats in each case to claim human prey.

German explorer Richard Meinertzhagen published the first Western description of a spotted lion in 1903, a year before he discovered the Congo's giant forest hog, but he failed to procure a specimen or photograph. In 1924, Kenyan hunter Blayne Percival shot a spotted lioness and her cubs, but he did not preserve their skins. In 1931, game warden R.E. Dent saw four spotted adults on Mount Kenya, near the Garcita River, between 10,000 and 11,000 ft. elevation. Dent's trappers later caught a spotted lion, but released it.

Before the end of 1931, Kenyan farmer Michael Trent shot two spotted lions that had raided his livestock in the Aberdare Mountains, at around 10,000 ft. elevation. He kept both skins, noting the male's sparse mane and the fact that both cats were below average size. Experts from the Nairobi Game Department examined the skins and agreed that the cats were adults, but declared them freaks that had somehow retained the spots normally seen on lion cubs.

Unsatisfied with tee verdict, explorer Kenneth Gandar Dower led an expedition into the Aberdare Mountains in 1935, hoping to kill or capture more marozi. He failed in his pursuit, but found three sets of adult-sized tracks between 10,000 and 12,500 ft. above



Spotted lions are reported throughout central Africa. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

sea level, where native witnesses had seen marozi stalking a herd of buffalo. Around the same time, hunter G. Hamilton-Snowball saw two spotted lions on the Kinangop Plateau, but they dodged his bullets and escaped.

Examination of the male lion's skin preserved by Michael Trent—now kept at London's Natural History Museum—reveals that the cat measured 8 ft., 8 in. long (tail included). Its mane was insignificant, with the longest hairs barely 5 in. in length. Its spots, covering the cat's abdomen and legs, were grayish-brown with darker centers. The largest of them measured 2.5 in. in diameter. Zoologists who examined the skin in 1931 and again in 1937 reported that the cat was roughly three years old, which ranks as full maturity.

No further evidence has been collected since the 1930s, but speculation concerning the marozi persists among cryptozoologists. Proposed explanations for the spotted-lion sightings include:

- Mistakes by observers who have seen normal lions in dappled shadows.
- Rare cases of lions whose juvenile spots do not disappear in adulthood.
- Adaptation of mountain-dwelling lions whose overall size decreased for greater agility, while their coats developed spots for camouflage, proposed by Kenneth Gandar Dower in 1937.
- Migration of Somali lions to Kenya, where they developed spotted coats for reasons still unclear, proposed by author Robert Foran in 1950.
- A still-unrecognized subspecies of lion, suggested by author J.R.T. Pollard in 1948 and supported by Bernard Heuvelmans when he proposed the name *Panthera leo maculatus* in 1955.

Another explanation, popular among some modern researchers, suggests the possibility of interbreeding between lions and leopards. No such crossbreeding in the wild has ever been confirmed, but hybrids *have* been produced in captivity. A "Congolese spotted lion," displayed in London during 1908, was actually born at a zoo in Chicago, after a male lion mated with a female jaguar/leopard hybrid. In 1959, a male leopard mated with a lioness at the Koshien Zoo in Nishinomiya, Japan, producing a spotted hybrid which zookeepers dubbed a "leopon." Other zoos in Germany and Canada have also produced "jaglions" or "jaguons," by mating male jaguars with female lions. The most recent specimens were born at Canada's Bear Creek Wildlife Sanctuary in April 2006.

Other hybrid big cats, produced by human intervention, include:

- The "liard" or "lipard"—also known as a "reverse leopon," sired by a male lion from a female leopard. The first known specimen was born at Austria's Schoenbrunn Zoo in 1951. Another was born in Florence, Italy in 1982.
- The "liguar," created by mating a male lion with a female jaguar.
- The "leoligular," produced by mating a male leopon with a lioness, or by crossing a male lion with a female liguar.
- The "liger," spawned by mating a male lion with a tigress. The first known specimens were born at a British zoo in October 1824, followed by subsequent litters in 1827, 1829, 1833 and 1838. Captive breeding of ligers continues to the present day, with healthy 21st-century litters born in Russia (December 2004) and China (July 2006). Ligers are the largest known hybrid big cats, reaching lengths of 10–12 ft., exceeding the size of either pure-breed parent.
- The "tigon"—also called "tiglon," "tigron," or "tion"—produced by mating a male tiger with a lioness. A report published by Wisconsin's Valley of the Kings animal sanctuary in 2005 claimed that 30–40 known tigons existed in captivity, most kept by private civilian owners.
- The "jagupard"—also called a "jagleop" or "jagulep"—occurs when a male jaguar mates with a female leopard. Austria's Hellbrunn Zoo claimed several jagupards in 1968, and at least one hybrid cub as been bred in Chicago.
- The "leguar" or "lepjag," produced when a male leopard mates with a female jaguar. London's Zoological Society published the first report of leguar cubs (without using that name) in 1861. Spain's Barcelona Zoo also produced a specimen in 1863.
- The "lijagulep," born from crossing a male lion with a female jagulep or lepjag.
- The "tigard," produced by breeding a male tiger with a female leopard. Two such experiments on record, from 1900 and 1908, both produced stillborn cubs.

Big cat cross-breeding only concerns cryptozoologists if it occurs in the wild, where hybrid offspring may be seen and reported as possible members of a new, unknown species. To date, the only claims of wild crossbreeding involve the dogla, a supposed hybrid reported from India, where native folklore claims that male leopards sometimes mate with female tigers. Despite published descriptions of such cats, no specimen has yet been documented scientifically.

Further Reading: Gandar Dower, K. *The Spotted Lion.* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937); Shuker, K. *Mystery Cats of the World,* (London: Robert Hale, 1989), pp. 125–32.

MNGWA

Mngwa ("strange one") is the Swahili name applied to a ferocious feline predator in the former East African territory of Tanganyika, now Tanzania. An alternate name for the beast is *nunda* ("fierce animal"). In neighboring Uganda, to the north of Tanzania, tribesmen call the creature *ndalawo* ("shadow leopard"). By any name, it is recognized as a deadly man-eater.

Witnesses who have seen the mngwa and lived to tell about it describe a large cat, sometimes as big as a donkey, with gray fur that sometimes shows stripes like a tabby cat's. In Uganda, at least, the cats are said to hunt in groups of three or four together, stalking humans in the rainforests.

The first known mention of a mngwa appears in a Swahili war-song, written in the year 1150. British author Edward Steere also mentioned the cat—as "Nunda, Eater of People"—in his book *Swahili Tales* (1870). As described by Steere, the nunda began life as a common cat in the household of Sultan Majnún, where it began to eat larger and larger prey. Each time, the Sultan rejected suggestions that he kill the cat, replying that he owned both the cat and its prey (first partridges, then sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and camels). Sultan Majnún changed his mind after the cat killed three of his sons, declaring, "It is no longer a cat; its name is *nunda*." The sultan's youngest son led a hunting party that killed the nunda, but while that story had a happy ending, other reports from Africa had very different conclusions.

East African tribesmen fear the ferocious mngwa. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

Captain William Hichens, the Native Magistrate at Lindi, Tanganyika, published an article on African mystery beasts in 1937 in which he related his experiences with the mngwa. During 1922, he wrote, one of the cats killed two native constables in Lindi, then moved on to terrorize a series of nearby fishing villages. The first victim in Lindi was found holding a clump of matted grayish hair, "as would come out of a lion's mane were it grasped and torn in a violent fight." Hichens ruled out lions, though, since none of those cats had approached a local town for many years, and because two frightened witnesses described the creature from the first attack as "a gigantic brindled cat" the size of a donkey.

The mngwa raids of 1922 ended as suddenly and mysteriously as they began, but resumed around another coastal village in the mid-1930s. As Hichens wrote in 1937:

> Not long ago a man was brought in to me at Mchinga on a litter and terribly mauled by some great beast. He said it was a *mngwa,* and as he himself was a brave and skillful native hunter, who had often tracked down lions, leopards and other 'killers' with me and other white men, why should we suppose that in this case he mistook a lion or leopard for some other beast? He had nothing to gain by telling me lies; on the contrary, as a hunter he depended for his livelihood on being absolutely truthful and trustworthy.

Hichens also noted that Swahili hunting songs clearly referred to three different large cats—the lion (*simba*), leopard (*nsui*), and *mngwa*—"plainly showing that there is no confusion in the native mind between these three great carnivores."

Patrick Bowen, a professional hunter, described his pursuit of a mngwa to author Frank Lane in 1954. Bowen had followed the cat's trail away from another Tanganyikan village after it snatched a young boy. An expert on African animal tracks, Bowen said, "The spoor we were following appeared to be that of a leopard as large as the largest lion." He also found some of the mngwa's hair, snagged on a fence when it forced its way through the village stockade, and reported that the hairs were brindled (marked with subtle stripes) and very different from a leopard's spotted coat.

Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans suggested that the mngwa might be an abnormally colored specimen of some known felid species, or perhaps a larger unknown subspecies of the African golden cat. Known throughout western and central Africa, including southwestern Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi (on the northwestern border of Tanzania), golden cats are much smaller than the mngwa or nunda described in eyewitness accounts. The largest golden cat on record measured 4 ft., 10 in. long (tail included), stood 21.5 in. tall at the shoulder, and weighed 31 lbs. No cases of attempted man-eating by golden cats have been reported.

Dr. Karl Shuker has proposed another mngwa candidate, *Panthera crassidens,* a lion-sized cat that inhabited Africa during the late Pliocene and early Pleistocene epochs, around 1.8 million years ago. Little is known about the species, which has no common name and is generally regarded as a long-extinct form of primitive leopard, though its jaw more closely resembles a tiger's.

Further Reading: Heuvelmans, B. *On the Track of Unknown Animals,* (London: Kegan Paul, 1995), pp. 495–502; Shuker, K. *Mystery Cats of the World,* (London: Robert Hale, 1989), pp. 137–41.

NANDI BEAR

Modern science denies the existence of any wild bears in Africa. The continent's only known species, the Atlas bear, was a subspecies of common brown bear that inhabited the Atlas Mountains of North Africa, ranging across Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Thousands were killed or captured and exported during Roman times, and Moroccan hunters shot the last known wild specimen in the 1870s. Occasional unverified sightings are still reported from the Atlas range, but none of the bears or their fossils has ever been found in Kenya, some 3,700 miles to the south.

Nonetheless, Kenya has produced frightening stories of a predator called the Nandi bear (named for the Nandi tribe, inhabiting the Great Rift Valley), also sometimes known as the *chemisit* ("devil") or *koddoelo*. In South Africa, a similar creature is called *khodumodumo* ("gaping-mouthed bush monster"). While descriptions of the creature vary, with some witnesses sketching a vicious hyena while others describe a giant baboon, all who know the Nandi bear agree that it is a merciless hunter that preys on both livestock and humans.

The first Western report of a Nandi bear came from Kenya's Uasin Gishu district, in the Rift Valley province. British explorer Geoffrey Williams saw the creature in 1905, but did not publish his report until more sightings surfaced in 1912. As he wrote in the *Journal of the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society:*

> In size it was, I should say, larger than the bear that lives in the pit at the "Zoo" and it was quite as heavily built. The fore quarters were very thickly furred, as were all four legs, but the hind quarters were comparatively speaking smooth or bare. . . . The head was long and pointed and exactly like that of a bear, as indeed was the whole animal. I have not a very clear recollection of the ears beyond the fact that they were very small, and the tail, if any, was very small and practically unnoticeable. The color was dark and left us with the impression that it was more or less of a brindle, like a wildebeest, but this may have been the effect of light.

When Williams showed a book of animal illustrations to Nandi villagers, asking them to choose a likeness of the creature, all selected pictures of brown bears.

British anthropologist C.W. Hobley collected multiple reports of the Nandi bear from the Uasin Gishu district in 1912, describing a black creature 18–20 in. tall at the shoulder, that moved with "a kind of shuffling walk" like a bear. Hunters who tracked the Nandi bear described it turning on their dogs and making "a peculiar moaning cry."

Uasin Gishu's District Commissioner N.E.F. Corbett saw a Nandi bear in March 1913 along the Sirgoi River. He described it as "a beast I have never seen before. Thick, reddish-brown hair, with a slight streak of white down the hind quarters, rather long from hock to foot, rather bigger than a hyena, with largish ears." The largest hyena on record was 4 ft., 5 in. long, stood 35 in. tall at the shoulder, and weighed 154 lbs.

Workmen and engineers on the Magadi Rail, Kenya's first private railway, filed more reports of Nandi bear sightings in March 1913. The most detailed description, from an engineer named Hickes, portrayed an animal that "looked about as high as a lion. In color it was tawny—about like a black-maned lion—with very shaggy long hair. It was short and thick-set in the body, with high withers [shoulders], and had a short neck and stumpy nose."

Meanwhile, C. W. Hobley published a description of a *koddoelo* killed near Ngao, in the Tana River district, after it terrorized villagers. Witnesses said that the creature was "as large as a man, sometimes going on four legs, sometimes on two, in general appearance like a huge baboon, and very fierce." Still, a rather different description from the same district referred to an animal "light in colour, long hair on neck and back, . . . rather smaller than a lion, tail about 18 inches long and some 4 inches broad, . . . fore-legs very thick." That creature attacked men on sight and had supposedly killed a rhinoceros near Makere, though Hobley did not believe it.

In 1933, British big-game hunter Charles Stoneham published an account of Nandi bear raids in Kenya's Maasai Mau forest, in the Nakuru and Narok districts. According to Stoneham, "Men told me it came down to the villages at night and murdered the inhabitants in their huts. It made its entrance through the roof, killed the occupants, and ate their brains. That was one of the beast's peculiarities; it ate only the brains of its victims. Women gathering firewood in the forest would be missed, and later their bodies would be discovered, always minus the tops of their skulls."

That habit earned the animal another name—*geteit*, "brain-eater"—among members of the Lumbwa tribe, in Kenya's Rift Valley. Settler Cara Buxton reported a case from 1919, when one of the predators killed 67 goats and sheep on local farms. "In no case were the bodies touched," she wrote, "but the brains were torn out."

The *chemisit* was equally vicious, but did not confine itself to eating brains. Game warden Blayne Percival described a reign of terror by one specimen in the Marakwet district shortly before World War I began in 1914. The devil's attacks were "so bad that great preparations were made to kill it, and at last it was killed by a party of men who put a dummy man in the doorway of a hut and sat inside and waited till the animal came and tried to take the dummy; it was then shot with arrows."

In 1925, another village suffered so many losses that its chief appealed to the Kenyan government for help. The latest victim was a 6-year-old girl, snatched after the monster forced its way through a hedge of thorns 8 ft. thick. Captain William Hichens investigated that case and was present when the beast returned to the village a few nights later. As Hichens described it for *Chambers's Journal* in 1927:

> I heard my pi-dog yelp just once. There was a crashing of branches in the bush, and then thud, thud, thud, of some huge beast making off. But that howl! I have heard half a dozen lions roaring in a stampede-chorus from twenty yards away; I have heard a maddened cow-elephant trumpeting; I have heard a trapped leopard make the silent night miles a rocking agony with screaming, snarling roars. But never have I heard, nor do I wish to hear again, such a howl as that of the chimiset.
>
> A trail of red spots on the sand showed where my pi-dog had gone. Beside that trail were huge footprints, four times as big as a man's, showing the imprint of three huge clawed toes, with trefoil marks like a lion's pad where the sole of the foot pressed down. But no lion . . . ever boasted such a paw as that of the monster which had made that terrifying spoor.

Hichens led a hunting party after the beast at dawn, but lost the tracks and never found his dog or the predator that had snatched it.

In his book *Africa Calling* (1935), big-game hunter Roger Courtney described his discovery of "two enormous pug marks, the size of dinner-plates, in a soft patch of ground.

They were spade-shaped and turned inward. The claws must have been non-retractile, as I could distinctly see the small cuts where they had dug into the earth. The fact that they turned inward revealed a bear-like character; otherwise I would have said that they had been made by the grandfather of all hyenas."

Official sources also took note of the Nandi bear. In the *Report of the Game Department of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya* for 1932–34, Captain F. D. Hislop, District Commissioner of Kapsabet, described his sighting of a large bear-like creature that "was not a hyena or a baboon." The same report included Gunnar Anderssen's report of a roaring animal that killed a forest hog near Kaimosi, described as "very big, with long black hair and a long tail carried like a dog's."

Charles Stoneham, who reported the Nandi bear's fondness for brains, also saw one of the beasts near the Kipsanoi River. He wrote: "It was the size of a lion, but its movements were unlike Simba's slouching stride. The grass came up to its belly, its head was held low before its bulk, it appeared to have an enormous tail. . . . It had a huge square head, and the snout of a pig; its eyes, two black spots, were fixed upon me in an observant stare. Large circular ears, the size of plates, stood up from its head, and they were transparent—I could see the grass through them. The creature's body was covered with coarse brown hair, its tail was the size of a tree trunk."

One last report of the beast comes from the 1960s, when engineer Angus McDonald was roused from sleep in Kipkabus, Kenya by a creature that invaded his hut through a window and chased him around for five minutes. McDonald said it was 7 ft. tall, had a face like an ape's, and ran equally well on four legs or two. Its footprints were round. Village inhabitants identified it as a *chemisit*.

So, if Africa has no living bears, and no bear known to science has a long, stout tail, what is the Nandi bear? Different authors have suggested various suspects, including:

- An aardvark, which inhabits much of Africa, resembles the beast seen by Stoneham and may reach a length of 7 ft. However, aardvarks feed almost exclusively on ants and termites. They are not ferocious and are physically incapable of devouring livestock or humans.
- An oversized ratel (or honey badger), an aggressive member of the weasel family whose range includes most of Africa. Ratels are fierce predators, but the largest on record was 4 ft., 4 in. long, stood 12 in. high at the shoulder, and weighed 30 lbs. No known ratel is capable of leaping stockades with a child in its jaws.
- A spotted hyena, the largest of three living hyena species, whose record specimen measured 5 ft., 10 in. long and weighed 200 lbs. While mainly known as scavengers, hyenas sometimes hunt living prey and have invaded village homes to attack sleeping humans. Their powerful jaws exert 1,000 lbs. of force, and human fatalities have been reported. A rabid hyena killed nine people and injured another 15 in Malawi in June 2005. In November 2007, a pack of hyenas killed a Kenyan hunter at Samburu.
- Surviving specimens of prehistoric short-faced hyenas, a large species that ranged from Africa to North America during the Middle Pliocene and Middle Pleistocene epochs. Presumed extinct for 500,000 years, these creatures stood 39 in. tall at the shoulder and exceeded 250 lbs. in weight. They hunted deer-sized prey and their jaws could crush elephant bones.

- Relict specimens of *Theropithecus oswaldi,* a prehistoric baboon presumed extinct for 400,000 years that rivaled modern gorillas in size. However, while they were giants, most paleontologists believe these creatures were also vegetarians.
- Another prehistoric mammal, the horse-sized *chalicothere,* believed extinct for 3.5 million years. Related to the modern rhinoceros and tapir, chalicotheres match the Nandi bear's general description, with forelegs much longer then their hind legs, but they had stubby tails and were strict vegetarians, possessing only a few teeth in their lower jaws.
- Human predators, either individual serial killers or members of a secret cult, such as West Africa's Leopard Society of the early 1900s, whose members wore leopard skins and mutilated their victims with steel claws. Gruesome ritual medicine murders continue in various parts of modern Africa, and have even spread to Britain in the 21st century, with several cases reported among London's African immigrants.

Further Reading: Heuvelmans, B. *On the Track of Unknown Animals,* (London: Kegan Paul, 1995), pp. 445–94.

QUEENSLAND TIGER

Australia has no indigenous cats. Aside from bats and rodents, all native Australian mammals are either marsupials (which carry their young in pouches through infancy) or monotremes (which lay eggs instead of giving birth to live young). Nonetheless, from 1864 through the 1980s, residents of the Australian state of Queensland reported encounters with tigers that preyed on dogs and livestock, sometimes threatening humans. Aboriginal tribesmen called the creatures *yarri,* but despite reports of several specimens shot and killed, they remain unidentified today.

Reports of Queensland tigers include the following:

- *1864:* A bullock driver employed by rancher W.T. Scott claimed the first sighting, near Cardwell.
- *1871:* The son of police magistrate Brinsley Sheridan shot a tiger that attacked his dog at Rockingham Bay, but the wounded animal escaped.
- *1871:* Five members of a surveying party heard nocturnal roaring along the Mackay River. The next morning, they found cat-like paw prints roughly the size of tracks made by a Labrador retriever.
- *1872:* Hunters led by Robert Johnstone tracked a striped predator to a cave littered with crushed wallaby bones, but it escaped.
- *1882–83:* German zoologist Carl Lumholtz collected sightings from the Herbert River Valley, but failed to catch one of the animals.
- *1900:* J.R. Cunningham killed a striped cat 6 ft. long (tail included), after it mauled his dog at Gootchie, near Maryborough.
- *1900:* A tiger killed one of J. MacGeehan's dogs at Kairi.
- *1904:* A farmer killed a tiger that invaded his kitchen. It was "very large and savage," and its coat was marked with "fawny black and yellow stripes."

- *1910:* Farmers around Tambourine Mountain described "a horrible big animal like a cat with stripes."
- *1915:* A resident of Tiaro shot a striped creature "slightly taller and heavier built than a domestic cat," which had 10 kittens.
- *1921:* Two witnesses saw a cat the size of a mastiff dog, feeding on a dead calf between Munna Creek and Tiaro.
- *1923:* G.W. Williams shot and skinned a tiger 3 ft., 5 in. long (tail included) at Springbrook Mountain.
- *1923:* Members of a British Museum expedition glimpsed a creature "as big as a dog, with a bushy tail and a round, flat, head, and striped in color" along the Moonie River.
- *1925:* Travelers in the Bellenden Range saw a creature "as large as a medium-sized dog" whose coat was "beautiful and striped like a tiger."
- *1932:* Hunters from Tully shot a "marsupial tiger" described as "half as big again as a domestic cat and striped like a tiger."
- *1940:* Loggers Charles and Nigel Tutt saw a 6-ft. tiger near Mount Stanley.
- *1945:* A cat-like creature with large tiger teeth frightened a Kuranda resident and his dogs.
- *1948:* An Aramara resident shot a striped "cat" with "an extra-large head mainly in width and extra-long tusks," after it attacked his dog. The creature stood 18–20 in. high at the shoulder.
- *1954:* A resident of Gootchie saw a tiger snarling at him from a tree while he was horseback riding east of town. The man said he had "never seen anything so savage and [with] such big fangs on any animal of that size."
- *1969:* Nancy O'Brien saw a "small, half-grown tiger" staring through a window of her home on the outskirts of Cairns.
- *1970:* A tiger killed a dog on the farm owned by D.G. Rodgers, near Gympie.
- *1970–73:* Naturalist Janeice Plunkett collected more than 100 reports of tiger sightings throughout Queensland.
- *1972:* Three truckers saw a tiger cross a highway near Cannibal Creek.
- *1972:* Motorist Steve Knowles reported a tiger sighting near Beenleigh.
- *1987:* Greg Calvert found clawed tracks larger than a dingo's near Hughenden and followed them for several hundred yards before losing the trail.

Opinions differ as to what the Queensland tiger might be. Prime suspects, still unverified, include:

- Surviving thylacines, as discussed in section 3. Officially extinct since 1936, thylacines have been sighted on many occasions since then, and while their coats *were* striped, critics of this theory note that thylacines did not possess the long claws and tusk-like fangs attributed to Queensland tigers, nor could they climb trees and growl like big cats (both common traits from Queensland tiger sightings).
- Tiger quolls, also known as "tiger cats," a species ranked as Australia's largest marsupial carnivore. Despite its status as an apex predator, the tiger quoll does not officially

exceed 3 ft., 6 in. in length—of which its tail contributes 1 ft., 6 in. Its coat is spotted, not striped, and it resembles a weasel more than a cat. Its prey includes birds, rats, small reptiles, and insects. There is no case on record of a quoll attacking dogs or cattle.

- Surviving specimens of *Thylacoleo carnifex* ("marsupial lion executioner," in Latin), a large predator presumed extinct for some 46,000 years. Fossil remains indicate that marsupial lions averaged 5 ft. in length, stood 30 in. tall at the shoulder, and weighed 220–350 lbs. Unlike other marsupials, these lions had retractable claws and primitive thumbs on their forefeet that aided both in climbing trees and hunting. Thylacoleo's teeth included incisors shaped like canine fangs and molars that functioned like shears to rip meat, all powered by jaws as strong as a modern lion's. Speculative sketches of Thylacoleo sometimes show striped coats, but we have no hides to confirm it. Skeptics note that no physical proof of Thylacoleo's survival presently exists.

Further Reading: Healy, T., and P. Cropper. *Out of the Shadows: Mystery Animals of Australia*, (Chippendale, NSW: Ironbark, 1994), pp. 99–110; Smith, M. *Bunyips & Bigfoots: In Search of Australia's Mystery Animals*, (Alexandria, NSW: Millennium, 1996), pp. 69–93.

SHUNKA WARAK'IN

The *shunka warak'in* is a North American cryptid whose name in the Ioway-Otoe-Missouria Native American language translates as "carrying-off dogs." Eyewitness descriptions recorded between 1886 and 2006 refer to a beast resembling a cross between a large dog or wolf and a hyena, with a long head and forelegs longer than its hind limbs.

In 1886, Montana farmer Israel Hutchins saw a shunka warak'in, or "ringdocus," as he chose to call it, on his Gallatin County ranch, in Madison Valley. When the beast appeared a second time, Hutchins shot it and traded the carcass to taxidermist Joseph Sherwood for a cow. Sherwood stuffed the animal and displayed it in his combination store-museum at Henry's Lake, in Idaho. He labeled the creature a "Guyasticutus," but it remained unidentified, with some viewers speculating that it was a deformed wolf, while others thought it a hyena that had escaped from a circus. After Sherwood died, his collection passed to the Idaho Museum of Natural History, where the shunka warak'in dropped out of sight.

In 1977, zoologist Ross Hutchins published a description of the animal shot by his grandfather 91 years earlier, but the specimen remained elusive. Author Loren Coleman suggested that the carcass might be found someday, but another 30 years elapsed before it came to light.

Meanwhile, in July 1991, several visitors to Canada's Alberta Wildlife Park reported sightings of a beast resembling a hyena, with heavy shoulders and long forelegs sloping back to thinner, low-slung hindquarters. No photographs were taken, and the strange creature eluded trackers.

Between December 2005 and November 2006, a predator resembling the shunka warak'in killed 120 sheep eastern Montana's Dawson, Garfield, and McCone counties. Ranchers described the beast's tracks as resembling those of a large dog. On November 2, 2006, federal agents shot an animal that they described as a 106-lb. male wolf with unusual reddish-yellow colored fur. Carolyn Sime, head of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and

Park department's wolf program, told reporters, "We do think it was a single animal and this chapter is closed."

Was it?

On December 9, 2006, Sime changed her story, telling the *Billings Gazette* that the dead creature "has mixed characteristics." Its coloring, teeth, and long claws suggested that the animal might be a hybrid raised in captivity. "Right now," Sime said, "we're just as curious as everyone else." Muscle tissue from the carcass was sent to the University of California, Los Angeles for DNA comparison with wolves from the northern Rocky Mountains whose fur is normally black, brown, or gray. Finally, on February 28, 2007 authorities declared that the animal was a domestic wolf, possessing "a hodgepodge mixture of DNA" unknown in the wild. Still, Sime admitted, "There were no permanent markings or tattoos on this animal, which are required by law."

Nine months after that announcement, in November 2007, the original shunka warak'in specimen from 1886 resurfaced at the Idaho Museum of Natural History in Pocatello. Jack Kirby, a grandson of Israel Hutchins, traced the mounted carcass and reclaimed it for display in Montana. The creature measures 4 ft. long (tail excluded) and stands 28 in. high at the shoulder, with an "odd-shaped head," sloping hindquarters like a hyena's, and a dark-brown coat mottled with lighter patches including faint stripes on its sides.

But what *is* it? When cryptozoologists called for DNA testing, Kirby opted to preserve his family's mystery, asking reporters, "Do we want to know?" With scientific inquiry obstructed, theorists speculate that the shunka warak'in might be a relict specimen of *Borophaginae* (hyena-like "bone-crushing dogs," presumed extinct for 2.5 million years) or *Chasmaporthetes* (a North American hyena presumed extinct for 1.8 million years). Without genetic testing, no conclusive judgment is possible.

Further Reading: Hutchins, R. *Trails to Nature's Mysteries*. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1977).

8

STRANGER STILL

Preceding chapters have collected reports of cryptids that share common traits or habitats. This section examines some of the creatures that fit nowhere else, including some that appear to defy simple logic and the dictates of mainstream science. Here, we shall meet apes with wings, men who resemble wolves and reptiles, burrowing worms so large and deadly that they terrorize humans, a man-sized frog that walks upright, and dragons translated from mythology to flesh and blood, together with some creatures so bizarre that no two witnesses present the same description of them. All may seem fantastic, some outrageous, but the fact remains that hundreds of witnesses claim personal encounters with these beasts that cannot exist. Are all of these reports from drunkards, flagrant liars, or the mentally disturbed? If not, our planet may conceal more secrets than even conservative cryptozoologists claim.

BATSQUATCH

Most people in the West have seen *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), with its flying monkeys who serve the Wicked Witch of the West. Few realize, however, that reports of even larger flying primates have been filed by witnesses in the western United States since 1994. Because it is said to resemble a Sasquatch with wings, the creature is nicknamed "Batsquatch."

The first public report of Batsquatch appeared in Tacoma, Washington's *News Tribune* on May 1, 1994. Reporter C.R. Roberts identified the witness as 18-year-old Brian Canfield, a high-school senior and "an average, normal kid" from Buckley, Washington. According to the story, Canfield was driving from Buckley to an isolated camp at Lake Kapowsin, near Mount Rainier, when his truck broke down at 9:30 P.M. on April 23. His headlights pointed to a nearby field, illuminating a beast from a nightmare.

It was an ape of sorts, 9 ft. tall, with blue fur, yellow eyes, "bird feet," a face like a wolf's with white teeth but no fangs, tufted ears, and bat-like wings "as wide as the road." After glaring at Canfield for several minutes, the monster flew off and Canfield's truck started up on his next try. In response to skeptics who claimed he was drunk or on drugs, Canfield said, "It did happen. I'm willing to put my life on it."

Internet sources claim a second sighting of Batsquatch in 1994, without providing a specific date. The alleged witness was mountain climber Butch Whittaker, whose full-time job involved running a liquor store. Whittaker supposedly met Batsquatch while preparing to climb Mount St. Helens. He says he snapped several photos, none of which has been published. According to the Batsquatch Web site (http://www.batsquatch.com/batsquatch/batsquatch.html), Whittaker remarked of his experience, "I'm not surprised. These things happen to me all the time!" The same site quotes a supposed article from an untraceable newspaper, the *Mountain News*, blaming Batsquatch for the disappearance of two cows, four goats, five chickens, and "our prized pig" Priscilla, which had been expected to win honors at a Pioneer Day festival before its abduction. While the Web site's unnamed author says that "the reality of the Batsquatch can no longer be denied," skeptics strongly disagree.

A different Web site offers another supposed Batsquatch sighting, this one occurring on "a dark and stormy night" in early 1998. The witness, identified only as "The Believer," claims that he (or she) was knocked unconscious while climbing a cliff at some undisclosed location; the witness later woke to see a winged purple creature flapping overhead. A passing truck allegedly struck the creature in mid-air, then swerved off the road and plummeted into the void. No record exists of any such crash, and suspicion of a hoax is reinforced by the author's sign-off: "Should you make any attempt to trace my email address, I will deny everything."

Raymond Crowe's International Bigfoot Society Web site includes an apparent Batsquatch report, filed by researcher Peter Gutilla. The undated story refers to multiple sightings of "a leaping, dog-faced, hairy-winged creature that left behind wide, 18-inch three-toed footprints" in California's San Bernardino County, southeast of Mount Baldy. Gutilla's report theoretically linked those sightings to discoveries of large three-toed tracks around Cucamonga Wash and Upland, in the same county, during July 1994. "And there," Crowe writes, "sadly, the matter rests . . . at least, for now."

Wisconsin author Linda Godfrey reports a "man bat" sighting near La Crosse on the night of September 26, 2006. A local man and his son were driving on Briggs Road when a shrieking "bat-like, man-like creature" flew across the road in front of them, nearly striking their car. They described the thing as 6 or 7 ft. tall, with a 12-ft. wingspan, clawed fingers and toes, and lips drawn back in a snarl over obvious fangs. Striving for a better description, both witnesses compared the thing to winged vampires depicted in the films *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and *Van Helsing* (2004).

Are these the product of witnesses' imaginations . . . or something else? In passing, we should note the sightings of another strange cryptid—a lizard man, sometimes possessing wings—reported in La Crosse in 1993. Around the same time, a flying reptile man was seen near Medford, Wisconsin, 103 miles further north. (See *Lizard Men* below.)

Further Reading: Arnold, N. *Monster!* (Bideford, North Devon: CFZ Press, 2007), pp. 45–48; Batsquatch. Available at http://www.batsquatch.com/batsquatch/batsquatch.html. Accessed May 15, 2009.

BUNYIPS

Bunyip, loosely translated as "devil" or "spirit," is one of many names applied by Aborigines to strange, unidentified creatures inhabiting various bodies of water through-

out Australia. Other names include *dongus*, *kianpraty*, *mochel-mochel*, *moolgewanke*, *tunataboh*, and *too-roo-dun*.

Eyewitness descriptions of bunyips vary widely. According to authors Paul Cropper and Tony Healy, some 60 percent of all bunyip sightings involve animals resembling a seal or swimming dog; 20 percent report creatures with large bodies, long necks, and manes; and the remaining 20 percent offer descriptions too strange or vague to classify with reference to known animals.

In general, the dog-seal bunyips typically have round heads and faces resembling a seal's or bulldog's, often with whiskers, shining eyes, and large ears. Their bodies rarely exceed 6 ft. long, are covered with dark shaggy hair, and display no visible tail. They swim by means of fins. Long-necked bunyips may reach lengths of 15 ft. or more, including a tail like a horse's. Their heads are also usually horse-like, as are the manes on their wrinkly necks, though some have tusks and others have heads resembling an emu's (Australia's second-largest bird). All bunyips live in water, but the longnecks sometimes come ashore, leaving odd three-toed tracks. At night, the bellowing cries of bunyips are audible for miles.

Aboriginal bunyip legends predate written history, and while the *Sydney Gazette* published the first known story of a bunyip in 1812, the first ear witness report was logged in June 1801 by Joseph Bailly, a French scientist who heard one of the creatures roaring along the Swan River in Western Australia. Hundreds of sightings followed, continuing into the 1970s. The best-known incidents include:

- *1812:* The *Sydney Gazette* published news of a sighting by witness James Ives, who described the beast he saw as "a large black animal like a seal, with a terrible voice that creates terror" among Aborigines in New South Wales.
- *1818:* Explorers Hamilton Hume and James Meehan discovered Lake Bathurst in New South Wales, along with skulls and bone fragments of large, unidentified animals that they presumed were amphibious. Oddly, they did not collect the bones, and Hume could not find them when he returned three years later.
- *1821:* Edward Hall saw a black creature with a bulldog head swimming in Lake Bathurst.
- *1822:* Hall and a friend saw a different bunyip at Lake Bathurst. He said, "Its neck was long, apparently about three feet out of the water, and about the thickness of a man's thigh; the color a jet-black; the head was rather smaller in circumference than the neck and appeared surrounded by black flaps, which seemed to hang down, and gave it a most novel and striking appearance."
- *1845:* Settlers found the apparent thigh bone of "a huge marine animal" at Great Corangamite Lake, in Victoria. A scientist from Melbourne, Dr. Hobart, went to examine the bone, but no report on his findings survives.
- *1846:* Settler Atholl Fletcher heard that Aborigines had killed a bunyip along the Murrumbidgee River in New South Wales and went to investigate. He found an unusual, long-snouted skull and took it to Melbourne, where Dr. James Grant claimed that it belonged to a fetus of some unknown species. Later, other scientists decided that the skull belonged to a young, deformed animal, but they disagreed on whether it was a calf or a colt. Only sketches of the skull survive today.

- *1847:* While scientists were studying the Murrumbidgee skull, a rancher tending stock along the same river saw a creature "about as big as a six months' old calf, of a dark brown color, [with] a long neck and long pointed head; it had large ears, . . . a thick mane of hair from the head down to the neck, and two large tusks . . . ; the fore-quarters of the animal were very large in proportion to the hind-quarters, and it had a large tail."
- *1848:* J.P. Main published a drawing of a bunyip made by an Aborigine living near the Murray River, in South Australia. The sketch depicts a quadruped with no tail, a small head, and (possibly) large teeth protruding from its mouth. From the drawing, it appears to be covered with feathers or scales, but as Cropper and Healy note, "it could just as easily be a sketch of a cow or a sheep."
- *1852:* While hunting ducks near Lake Tiberias, in Tasmania, Joseph Barwick shot an animal that he mistook for a Tasmanian devil. A closer look revealed a creature "quite unlike any animal I ever saw before. His length appeared to be about 4 ft. or 4 ft., 6 inches, color black, with a remarkable round bulldog head." Though wounded, the beast escaped into deep water and vanished, leaving behind a clump of glossy black hair 2 in. long. During the same year, author John Morgan published the biography of escaped convict William Buckley, who had seen bunyips swimming in Lake Modwarre, Victoria at various times. Buckley said, "I could never see any part except the back, which appeared to be covered with feathers of a dusky-gray color. [They] seemed to be about the size of a full-grown calf, and sometimes larger."
- *1853:* A hunter camped beside the Rocky River, in South Australia, heard a "curious noise" in the water and saw "a large blackish substance" that proved to be an animal with "a large head and a neck something like that of a horse, with thick bristly hair." He estimated its length at 15–18 ft.
- *1856:* Geologist E. J. Dunn saw several creatures swimming in the Murrumbidgee River. They made a mooing sound like calves and "had round heads, with no visible ears, but eyes that could be seen, dark-colored fur, length of animals about five feet." Dunn concluded that they were seals.
- *1857:* A naturalist named Stocqueler reported seeing six bunyips at various times, while exploring the Goulburn and Murray Rivers in New South Wales. The animals ranged from 5 to 15 ft. in length. All had glossy black hair and "two small paddles or fins attached to the shoulders, a long swan-like neck, a head like a dog, and a curious bag hanging under the jaw, resembling the pouch of the pelican." Despite these odd features and the great size of some bunyips, Stocqueler believed they were "freshwater seals."
- *1863:* Charles Headlam and his son were rowing a boat across Tasmania's Great Lake when they nearly struck "a large-looking beast, about the size of a fully-developed sheepdog. The animal immediately started off at great speed. . . . It appeared to have two small flappers, or wings, which it made good use of, as I would think it went at a rate of 30 miles per hour."
- *1867:* Rancher I. W. Scott found an Aboriginal earth carving of a bunyip at Challicum Station, in Victoria, supposedly commemorating a site where one of the creatures was killed. The original carving was 30 ft. long and seemed to depict a two-legged

animal, but it is difficult to say which end was meant to be the head. Only Scott's pencil sketch of the carving exists today.

- *1868:* Francis McPartland, a policeman's son from Picton, New South Wales, saw several bunyips playing and splashing around in Swan Bay. They were the seal-dog type, with bulldog heads, and averaged 3–4 ft. long.
- *1872:* In April, the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* reported a bunyip inhabiting Midgeon Lagoon, north of Narrandera, New South Wales. It was "about half as long again as an ordinary retriever dog; the hair all over its body was jet-black and shining, its coat was very long, the hair spreading out on the surface of the water for about five inches." Long hair hid its eyes, but "the ears were well marked." Later that year, a duck-hunter on Victoria's Corangamite Lake capsized his boat after he met "an animal like a big retriever dog, with a round head and hardly any ears."
- *1873:* A surveying party at Lake Cowal, New South Wales, reported an unknown creature "like an old man blackfellow, with long dark-colored hair" swimming across the lake. Despite that description, the witnesses agreed that it was not a human being.
- *1876:* Various witnesses saw a bunyip nicknamed the "Hairy Nondescript" along Crystal Brook, in South Australia.
- *1886:* Horsemen riding along the Molonglo River, in New South Wales, encountered a peculiar bunyip "white in color and about the size of a large dog; its face was like the face of a child." The animal fled when they pelted it with stones.
- *1887:* Hunter Carl Lentz scoured Queensland's Merrimac Swamp for a pair of bunyips often heard calling back and forth to one another from a half-mile apart. Although he never found them, Lentz concluded that the animals were crocodiles.
- *1890:* "Extraordinary tales" from Euroa, Victoria, described a large, unknown creature living in a nearby swamp. Agents from the Melbourne Zoo stalked the beast with nets and cameras, but they found only "several suspicious-looking tracks," which were not described in detail.
- *1929–30:* Residents of Leeton, New South Wales reported a remarkable creature dwelling in nearby Tuckerbill Swamp. As described by witnesses, the animal could swim in different directions without turning around, since it had a head at both ends!
- *1934:* While ranching on Queensland's Gold Coast, Carl Lentz and Bob Vevers lost at least 10 cattle to some creek-dwelling predator whose cries were "halfway between a bark and a roar."
- *1947:* Three witnesses described a strange beast living in the Little Murray River, near Swan Hill, Victoria. It was black, perhaps 3.5 ft. long, and swam with a foot-long neck protruding from the water. At times, it spouted water 5 ft. in the air and made shrill whistling sounds.
- *1949:* Tourists at Victoria's Lauriston Reservoir reported bunyip sightings spanning a two-week period. The animal was 4 ft. long, with shaggy ears that doubled as paddles, propelling it through the water "at tremendous speed."
- *1965:* Bunyip reports flourished along Queensland's Gold Coast, from swamps between Burleigh and Mudgeeraba. The beast was heard more often than seen, and its nocturnal call was described as "a roar similar to, but distinct from, that of a bull and

coming at some five seconds intervals." Daylight search parties scoured the district but found nothing.

- *1971:* Newspapers reported that a bunyip living in a lagoon near Lismore, New South Wales had eaten several ducks and swans. Witnesses said the thing was 6 ft. long and as stout as an oil drum. Zoologists debated visiting the site but never did.

Without physical evidence, we can only speculate on the bunyips' identity. Hoaxes aside, zoologists note that the sounds made by bunyips resemble cries produced by various known animals. Two groups of marsupials, koalas and opossums, are capable of loud, eerie calls that would surprise most visitors to zoos. Likewise, several birds, including barking owls, bitterns, and bush stone-curlews, produce startling sounds that may be audible for miles. For eyewitness sightings, the most common theories include:

- *Seals or sea lions:* Several species inhabit Australian coastal waters and are known to swim upriver on occasion. This explanation hits a snag with landlocked lakes or rivers, since the only exclusively freshwater seals known to science inhabit two lakes in Russia and one in Finland. None have been found in Australia, but cryptozoologists suggest that a still-unknown species may dwell Down Under.
- *Crocodiles:* Publicly suggested as possible bunyips in 1887, these reptiles may explain certain cases where livestock and other animals have been devoured, but most Australians are familiar with crocodiles. Furthermore, crocodiles do not have paddles, hair, long necks, bulldog faces, or visible ears.
- *Murray cod:* This is a predatory freshwater fish whose record specimen was 6 ft. long and weighed 250 lbs. Their normal color runs through shades of green, but some are mottled black or brown. The same arguments raised against crocodile bunyips—hair, long necks, and floppy ears—apparently disqualify the Murray cod (and any other fish) from many recorded sightings.
- *Musk ducks:* Author George Eberhart says that one of these birds was mistaken for a bunyip in Sydney in 1960, but he provides no details. The largest specimen on record was 28 in. long, and while ducks swim with their heads and necks raised above water, they have no hair, long ears, or bulldog faces.
- *Platypuses:* The platypus is one of nature's strangest creatures: an amphibious, egg-laying mammal with a duck's bill, webbed feet like an otter, a beaver's flat tail, and venomous spurs on its ankles. Dr. Robert Endean, a professor of zoology at Queensland University, believed that the Lismore bunyip of 1971 was a platypus, although he did not visit the lagoon to prove it. Arguments against that theory include the normal size of a platypus (20 in. long, 5 lbs. in weight) and its diet of worms, insect larvae, and shellfish. No platypus on record has ever dined on ducks and swans.
- *Prehistoric survivors:* Dismissed out of hand by mainstream scientists, this theory still persists among cryptozoologists, with several suspects named to explain the varied descriptions of bunyips. The most popular suspects include: the diprotodon, earth's largest known marsupial at 10 ft. long, 6 ft. tall, and 6,142 lbs., presumed extinct for 40,000 years; the procoptodon, a short-faced kangaroo that stood 10 ft. tall and weighed 500 lbs., believed to have died out between 50,000 and 18,000 years ago; and the quinkana, a 16-ft. crocodile that inhabited Australia between 24 million

years and 40,000 years ago; however, the quinkana was amphibious. No evidence exists that any of these species have survived to modern times.

- *Unclassified species:* Suggestions that bunyips represent a still-unknown species generally fall into two broad categories. Some researchers propose an unrecognized marsupial resembling a large otter to explain the dog-seal sightings, while others cover the longneck sightings with a hypothetical lake monster resembling Scotland's Nessie (see section 5).

Further Reading: Healy, T., and P. Cropper. *Out of the Shadows.* (Chippendale, NSW: Ironbark, 1994); Smith, M. *Bunyips & Bigfoots.* (Alexandria, NSW: Millennium, 1996).

DOGMEN

Legends of werecreatures—humans cursed or empowered to transform themselves into the shape of different animals—exist in the mythology of every race and nation on our planet. Thanks to Hollywood, Americans are most familiar with werewolves, portrayed in countless movies, TV shows, and novels through the years. While some are frightening and others humorous, science insists that no such creatures actually exist, yet reports of vicious, hairy bipeds, shaped like humans but with canine faces, fangs, and claws, continue to emerge from widely-scattered points in the United States and Canada.

America's most famous dogman is the legendary "Beast of Bray Road," reported by numerous witnesses from Elkhorn, Wisconsin and its surrounding areas since autumn 1989. Those reports, and a best-selling book by Wisconsin journalist Linda Godfrey, inspired a 2005 horror film named for the creature, but the events depicted in the film are wholly fictional.

As for the eyewitness reports. . . .

While researching her book, Linda Godfrey discovered that Wisconsin hairy biped sightings date from 1929, but most of those collected over the following 60 years describe creatures resembling a more traditional Bigfoot. Dogman witnesses in Elkhorn and elsewhere refer to a creature of humanoid form (except for its snarling canine head) weighing an estimated 400–700 lbs. When walking on all fours, it measures 2–4 ft. high at the shoulder, rising to an estimated 7 ft. when it stands or runs on its hind legs. Most sightings involve upright movement, including cases when the creature leaps over ditches and fences or jumps from bridges. Sometimes the monster threatens people, while at other times it seems to dine on roadkill. Alleged dogman footprints are rarely clear enough to photograph or cast in plaster.

Godfrey's research on the Bray Road beast also uncovered dogman sightings in 10 other states and Québec, Canada. Those regions include:

- *Michigan:* Dogman sightings date from 1938 and have continued into the 21st century. The first report emerged from Paris, Michigan, where Robert Fortney suffered an attack by five wild dogs. He shot one of them, claiming that one of the four that got away ran on two legs. An Allegan County resident saw a similar creature in the late 1950s, and two fishermen at Manistee reported a sighting in 1967. That same year (1967) brought reports from several witnesses at Cross Village. Members of a family at National Mine claimed two sightings, in 1980 and 1994. Lake County's

sheriff investigated a supposed dogman attack on a rural cabin in July 1987. A Traverse City witness claimed a dogman sighting in 1989, while Reed City produced a rash of sightings (and a blurry dogman photo) in 1993–94. Veronica Freels and her daughter saw a creature resembling the dogman in Wexford County, in July 1997. Reed City produced another sighting in June 2006, followed by claims that dogmen or their tracks had been photographed in Antrim County (February 2007) and Benzie County (May 2007).

- *Texas:* An article on "The Converse Carnivore," published in the *San Antonio Express-News* on October 29, 1989 describes the supposed slaying of a 13-year-old boy by "a half-wolf, half-human creature," sometime in the 1960s. No further details were provided.
- *Pennsylvania:* German immigrants brought werewolf legends with them when they came to Pennsylvania in the 18th century, but modern sightings date from 1973, when two farmers in Lancaster County saw a snarling biped "the size of a good heifer" snatch one of their chickens. Strangely, the creature also had horns on its head, resembling those of a goat. A smaller, hornless creature 4–5 ft. tall terrorized northwestern Pennsylvania's Shenango Valley between 1978 and 1998. In February 2002, the action returned to Lancaster County, with sightings of a 5-ft. dogman.
- *Kentucky:* Linda Godfrey found no sightings from the Bluegrass State, but author Bart Nunnelly reports several in his book *Mysterious Kentucky* (2007). The first involves a creature seen by five Henderson residents in 1951. Fourteen years later, a Boyd County motorist sighted a 6-ft. beast that "looked just like a werewolf." Jan Thompson, who claims several monster sightings in Kentucky, says that a dogman slaughtered several campers near Grand Rivers in 1978, and that police suppressed the facts. Two Harrison County residents saw a 3-ft. creature resembling "a slightly shaggy monkey with lupine legs" in autumn 1991. More recently, in June 2006, a Trigg County witness claimed a sighting of a dogman with sinister eyes that had barked and howled around the witness's farm for the past five years.
- *Québec, Canada:* In the early 1990s, a couple living near Blue Sea Lake saw "an enormous wolf" walking on two legs beside a rural highway. As their car approached, the beast crouched, then leaped an estimated 30 ft. and vanished into trees along the road.
- *Illinois:* In July 1989, a couple driving near Des Plaines, Illinois saw a 6-ft. tall, shaggy biped running along Highway 12. In September 1994, two officers assigned to patrol the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in North Chicago met a creature with a dog-like head standing more than 6 ft. tall on its hind legs. Ten years later, residents of Decatur saw "four dog-like creatures walking on their hind legs" around a suburban home.
- *Louisiana:* In summer 2000, Cajun residents of Franklinton blamed a *loup-garou* ("werewolf," in French) for strange nocturnal howling sounds and the mutilation of dogs.
- *Tennessee:* Patricia Law, of Pikesville, reported a dogman sighting during the winter of 2003–04. The man-sized beast had "a long snout and large teeth . . . and it was sort of grinning at me."

- *Missouri:* Late in 2003, a savage "hyena-like animal" treed a hunter from Springfield. Other local residents described "wolf-like creatures, muddy brown and black, with weird heads, and stove-pipe long necks."
- *New York:* In June 2004, two men driving near Lake Champlain sighted "two huge wolves running on their back two feet" along an interstate highway. One witness claimed the creatures were "running nearly 100 miles per hour."
- *Ohio:* In 2004, an unidentified Iowa resident claimed an encounter with a large biped whose face resembled "a mix between a dog's and a human's." No location was cited, but another report from August 2005 placed a black "man dog" with a "huge dog head" in Liberty, near Sycamore State Park.
- *Georgia:* In June 2005 a Native American witness reported seeing a large hairy biped in a southern Georgia swamp. As he described the animal, "It had a long snout and tall ears that pointed up, similar to a husky's." The ears stood 5–6 in. tall, with tufts of hair on top like those of a lynx. The creature was at least 6 ft., 5 in. tall and weighed an estimated 250–275 lbs.

Researchers have suggested various explanations for dogman or werewolf sightings. Aside from hoaxes and hallucinations, the dogman candidates include:

- *Deformed or diseased dogs, coyotes, or wolves.* Injury or illness (including mange and other skin diseases) may radically alter an animal's normal appearance, but no condition recognized by veterinary science can transform a normal-sized canid into a biped the size of a human or larger.
- *Abnormal human beings.* A rare disease called hypertrichosis (or werewolf syndrome) causes its victims to sprout extreme amounts of facial and body hair, sometimes producing a resemblance to classic Hollywood werewolves. The condition *does not* increase physical stature, nor does it produce dog-like snouts and fangs. While it is theoretically possible that a few victims of hypertrichosis may live alone in remote forest settings, no evidence suggests that they abound in nature—or that giant-sized hermits in radical need of haircuts have been mistaken for dogmen across North America.
- *Bears seen walking on their hind legs.* It is true that bears can stand and walk slowly on two legs. Some circus bears are even taught to dance upright, often by the cruel means of twisting a rope or wire through holes drilled in the muzzle to keep them upright. None, however, run at any speed on two feet, and their relatively short hind legs would not permit them to step or leap over fences, ditches, and so forth without dropping to all fours.
- *Bigfoot.* Large unknown primates like those discussed in section 4 may explain some—or most—dogman sightings, but the long snouts and prominent ears reported by many witnesses pose a problem. Among known apes and monkeys, only baboons fit the dogman's facial profile, while most have noses flatter than those of humans. The same flat-faced description is reported in most Bigfoot sightings, with only rare references to any visible ears.
- *Prehistoric survivors.* Members of the family *Amphicyonidae,* commonly known as bear-dogs lived between the Late Eocene and Late Miocene epochs, presumably becoming

extinct around nine million years ago. They were carnivores equal in size to American black bears and now regarded by most paleontologists as primitive canids. Like other dogs and wolves, bear-dogs were quadrupeds, and even if they have survived to modern times, nothing suggests that they could run on their hind legs. The same is true of another North American canid, the dire wolf, presumed extinct for some 10,000 years. Dire wolves were smaller than bear-dogs, with the largest known specimen measuring 5 ft. long and weighing an estimated 175 lbs.

- *Alien visitors.* Some theorists believe that dogmen drop in to visit from other dimensions or faraway planets where such beasts are common. While we may say anything is possible, no evidence exists at present to substantiate such notions.
- *Occult entities.* Some religions believe that evil creatures resembling werewolves may be conjured up by worshiping various demons (or Satan himself). Various cultures, including Native American tribal mythology, also have legends of shape-shifters or skin-walkers that take on the form and habits of wild animals. Again, while these beliefs are often taken very seriously, no scientific evidence exists to support them.

Further Reading: Godfrey, L. *The Beast of Bray Road.* (Black Earth, WI: Prairie Oak Press, 2003); Godfrey, L. *Hunting the American Werewolf.* (Madison, WI: Trails Books, 2006).

DRAGONS

Every culture on earth has legends of dragons—large reptilian creatures of various descriptions (serpentine, two- or four-legged, winged), sometimes capable of breathing fire or venom, often possessing unusual powers (hypnosis, human speech, immortality, etc.). The name "dragon" derives from the Greek *drakōn,* describing a giant snake, and since some of the earliest reported dragons had no legs, cryptozoologists believe they may have been pythons found in areas where none supposedly exist today.

Students of dragon lore recognize two broad types of dragons, European and Asian. European dragons were often legless, called *wyrm, wurm,* or *orm* in various languages, denoting a "worm" (or serpent). Finland's legendary dragon was called *lohikäärme,* or "salmon snake," referring to its preference for caves near lakes. In later legends, European dragons sprouted horns, legs, and wings, but nearly all remained the deadly enemies of human beings, devoted to ruining crops or eating people and livestock.

Asian dragons were less predictable. Some were kind and helpful to humans, while others served as omens of coming events. Dragons portrayed in Asian art are generally more colorful than their European cousins, sporting huge wings and elaborate decorations in the form of frills, tusks, or even precious stones. Dragons were so important to Asian folklore that many Westerners still use a dragon as the symbol of China, much as they represent Russia with a bear, Britain with a lion, and the United States with a bald eagle.

The universal prevalence of dragons in folklore and legend requires explanation. Skeptics who deny that any form of dragon ever lived suggest various reasons why every race on earth claims contact with large impossible reptiles. These explanations include:

- *Psychology:* Early humans who lived in fear of large snakes, crocodilians, or other predators may have exaggerated their size, form, and power. Cobras that spit venom may explain part of the dragon myth. Lightning and wildfires also may have terror-

ized primitive tribes, who blamed them on supernatural creatures just as early Greeks and Romans believed the sun was a fiery chariot crossing the sky.

- *Fossils:* Just as the excavation of frozen woolly mammoths sparked Russian myths of giant rats tunneling through the earth, the discovery of huge fossils from dinosaurs and prehistoric mammals might encourage belief in dragons or other strange creatures.
- *Prehistoric survivors:* While mainstream scientists reject this notion, some cryptozoologists suggest that dragon sightings from historical times may result from meetings with dinosaurs or other prehistoric animals believed to be extinct. (See section 3.)

The fact is that dragon sightings are not confined to ancient legends handed down by word of mouth over thousands of years before written records existed. In fact, they are rather common. Examples from modern times include:

- *1837:* Farm workers outside Gloucester, Massachusetts fled from a scaly beast the size of a cow with bat-like wings, webbed feet, and spiral horns. As it ran, "flames came out of its mouth and nostrils, scorching the brush in its path."
- *1857:* Passengers aboard a Missouri River steamboat saw "a great undulating serpent" breathing fire in the clouds overhead. The incident inspired a local folk song.
- *1873:* A "huge serpent, perfect in form," reportedly flew over Fort Scott, Kansas in broad daylight.
- *1873:* Days after the Kansas sighting, citizens of Bonham, Texas saw a yellow-striped creature "as long as a telephone pole" soar overhead, "displaying the maneuvers of a genuine snake."
- *1877:* Jabez Smith claimed that a red dragon with a 20-ft. neck had attacked a bull on his farm near Cahokia, Missouri. The bull fought back and gored the dragon, which fled into a nearby river.
- *1882:* A 30-ft. snake with wings pursued a train for several miles outside Dos Palmas, in California's Riverside County, while passengers fired pistols at it.
- *1883:* A "monstrous dragon with glaring eyeballs and mouth wide open, displaying a tongue which hung like a flame of fire from its jaws" was seen in the Catoctin Mountains, near Frederick, Maryland.
- *1885:* Swedish scientist Gunnar Hylten-Cavallius published a book on dragons in his native land, stating that "a species of giant snakes, called dragons or *lindorms,* continues to exist." Eyewitness accounts described reptiles 10–20 ft. long.
- *1887:* Factory workers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania reported a "monster serpent" flying through the air above their workplace.
- *1888:* Residents of Darlington County, South Carolina reported a 15-ft. winged reptile "sailing through the air with a speed equal to that of a hawk or buzzard."
- *1891:* A winged reptile 20 ft. long flew over Crawfordsville, Indiana on two September nights.
- *1902:* During the Russo-Japanese war, soldiers reported sightings a winged cave-dwelling dragon, 40 mi. from Muling, in Heilongjiang province.
- *1904:* Several residents of Troutman, North Carolina saw 30 large snakes flying by means of fins described as 5 ft. long and 4–5 in. wide.

- *1913:* Canadian hunters tracked a large, fire-breathing cryptid in the Yukon wilderness, around McClintock Lake, but it eluded them.
- *1917:* A British combat pilot in World War I reported that he had to dodge "a curiously colored dragon-like animal apparently floating in the air" after it swooped toward his airplane.
- *1933:* Maryland resident Helen Kay reported a dragon swimming in the Patuxent River near a children's summer camp. With reports like this one in mind, some cryptozoologists suggest that sightings of lake monsters and sea serpents (see section 5) may have inspired some dragon tales.
- *1934:* A huge dragon-like creature frightened a South Dakota farmer, causing him to crash his tractor. Police followed large footprints to nearby Campbell Lake, where they disappeared.
- *1935:* An 8-ft. green-and-yellow dragon was seen in forests around Monterose, Italy, north of Rome.
- *1969:* A 15-foot reptile chased several witnesses near Forli, Italy.
- *1975:* A farmer outside Goro, Italy saw a 10-ft. snake with legs run through his field. Police found tracks, but no dragon.
- *1982:* A gray reptile with short legs soared through the skies over various districts of England between September and November. Its wings resembled a bat's, and it uttered sounds ranging from grunts to screams.
- *1996:* Ten campers in Britain's Lake District sighted a flying creature shaped like a manta ray, with a 36-ft. wingspan.
- *2003:* Schoolteacher David Nardiello saw a long-necked, four-legged reptile with leathery wings, shark eyes, and fangs emerge from a flooded rice paddy outside Osaka, Japan.

Skeptics dismiss all such reports as hoaxes, delusions, or mistaken sightings of misplaced exotic reptiles such as pythons, crocodiles, or monitor lizards. Witnesses insist that their statements are true, but so far no conclusive evidence exists to support them.

Further Reading: Freeman, R. *Dragons: More than a Myth?* (Bideford, North Devon, UK: CFZ Press, 2005); Freeman, R. *Explore Dragons*. (Loughborough, UK: Explore Books, 2006).

JERSEY DEVIL

The Jersey Devil is a legendary creature said to inhabit the Pine Barrens of southern New Jersey. Sprawling over 1,737 square miles, the sparsely-settled region supported mining and logging until the mid-19th century, but pine forests have now reclaimed most of the area, leaving it dotted with crumbling ghost towns. Tourists occasionally visit the Pine Barrens, but its only modern industry involves the cultivation of blueberries and cranberries around the towns of Hammonton and Chatsworth.

Tales of strange creatures in the Pine Barrens predate the arrival of European settlers. Lenni Lenape Indian tribesmen called the region *Popuessing*, or "place of the dragon," and early Swedish settlers called it "Drake Kill," meaning "dragon river." Conflicting stories of the Jersey Devil's birth date from 1735, when a Mrs. Shrouds of Leeds Point or a Mrs. Leeds

of Estelville reportedly discovered she was pregnant with her 13th child. Already overburdened, the expectant mother said she hoped her next child was a devil—and she got her wish. The infant, born with wings, horns, and a tail, took one look at its crowded home and flew into the wilderness, where it remains at large today.

That story is incredible, but superstitious myths alone may not explain the Jersey Devil sightings reported by some 2,300 witnesses over three centuries. Descriptions of the creature(s) vary widely, and while some depict a hairy primate similar to Bigfoot (see section 4), others sketch a weird composite beast resembling nothing known to science.

One of the earliest recorded witnesses was Commodore Stephen Decatur Jr., who reportedly saw the Jersey Devil while testing naval cannons at the Hanover Iron Works sometime between 1816–and 1819. All versions of the story claim that Decatur had gunners fire on the beast, but different versions vary on the result. Some claim a cannonball damaged one of its wings, while others say the projectile passed through the creature without harming it. A clean miss seems more likely.

Giuseppe Bonaparte, eldest brother of French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and one-time king of Spain (1808–13), lived in New Jersey from 1817 to 1839 and allegedly saw the Jersey Devil while hunting near Bordentown, in 1820. Two decades later, during the years 1840–41, residents of the Pine Barrens blamed the Devil for killing their sheep and poultry. Strange screams accompanied the raids, and the predator left unidentifiable tracks. A sighting emerged from Haddonfield in 1859, and Bridgeton residents claimed multiple encounters with the Devil during winter 1873. More sightings were logged from Brigantine, Leeds Point, Long Branch, and Smithville between 1887 and 1894. More sheep and chickens vanished during nocturnal raids around Burrsville and Vincentown in 1899.

Folklorist Charles Skinner offered New Jersey residents hope of relief in 1903, declaring that the Jersey Devil myth had run its course after 168 years. He predicted that the creature would be seen no more in modern times, and grateful Pine Barrens settlers believed him—until January 1909.

No period before or since has produced more Jersey Devil sightings than the week of January 16–23, 1909. The panic began when a long-necked creature with a horse's head, cloven hooves, and a long tail was seen flying over Woodbury, New Jersey. On January 17, in Bristol, Pennsylvania, the same thing frightened a minister, left tracks in the snow, and dodged gunshots from local policeman James Sackville. On the 18th, the creature returned to New Jersey, leaving hoofprints around Burlington, Columbus, Hedding, Kinhora, and Rancocas. Hunting dogs refused to follow its trail.

In Gloucester, at 2:30 A.M. on January 19, Nelson Evans and his wife saw the creature outside their home. As Nelson described it, "it was about eight feet and a half high, with a head like a collie dog and a face like a horse. It had a long neck, wings about two feet long, and its back legs were like those of a crane, and it had horse's hooves. It walked on its back legs and held up two short front legs with paws on them. It didn't use the front legs at all while we were watching. My wife and I were scared, I tell you, but I managed to open the window and say, 'Shoo!' and it turned around, barked at me, and flew away." Two local hunters followed its trail for 20 miles, and then lost it. Witnesses in Camden saw the same beast flapping overhead and barking like a dog.

Witness George Snyder saw a smaller creature in Moorestown, on January 20. According to him, "It was three feet high . . . [with] long black hair over its entire body, arms and hands like a monkey, face like a dog, split hooves, . . . and a tail a foot long." John Smith

saw the same beast prowling around Moorestown's Mount Carmel Cemetery. Hunting parties tracked the Devil around Collingswood and Haddonfield, while mysterious hoof prints were found in Riverside, on rooftops, and around the body of a dead puppy.

On January 21, 1909, the Jersey Devil allegedly attacked a cable car in Haddon Heights, prompting nearby towns to post armed guards on their trolleys. A telegraph worker claimed to have shot the Devil near Atlantic City, but it escaped once again. Sightings ranged as far afield as Philadelphia, but most occurred throughout New Jersey. In Camden, the owner of a dog mauled by the flying beast said, "In general appearance it resembled a giraffe. . . . It has a long neck and from what glimpse I got of its head its features are hideous. It has wings of a fairly good size and of course in the darkness looked black. Its legs are long and somewhat slender and were held in just such a position as a swan's when it is flying. . . . It looked to be about four feet high."

Panic spread statewide by January 22, though actual sightings decreased. Factories closed in Gloucester and Hainesport, as did a school in Mt. Ephraim, when many New Jersey residents refused to step outside their homes. One of the day's few sightings came from Camden, where Patrolman Louis Strehr saw the creature drinking from a horse's trough. Jacob Henderson, in Salem, also saw a beast with "wings and a tail."

The rash of January incidents ended as suddenly as it began, and the only other sighting for 1909 occurred in February, when a maintenance man for an electric railroad in Clayton saw a flying beast collide with power lines above the tracks, yet soar away unharmed. Philadelphia's zoo offered a $1 million reward for the Jersey Devil's capture, and despite several hoaxes—including a kangaroo with artificial wings attached—the cash was never claimed.

Eighteen years passed before the next sighting, in 1927. A cab driver in Salem stopped to change a flat tire, but fled in panic when a hairy flying beast landed on top of his taxi. Eerie screams, but no sightings, were reported from Woodstown in 1936, and residents of Mount Holly found more hoof prints on their rooftops in winter 1939. Some authors claim another sighting on December 7, 1941, when Japanese aircraft bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, but no details were cited.

Soldiers stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey, reported multiple Jersey Devil sightings shortly after World War II. One military guard chased "a white thing" into the woods and then lost it, while an unseen vandal slashed tents and generated panic. Posses from Gibbsboro stalked a "bloody-faced Devil" in 1951, but descriptions were confused, some referring to a "hairy man" 7 ft. tall. Witness Phillip Smith, described as "a sober and honest man," allegedly saw the Jersey Devil strolling down his street in 1953, but no published source records the location.

In 1957, officers from the New Jersey Department of Conservation found a strange carcass in the Pine Barrens following a wildfire. Although burned and decomposed, the remains apparently included the "claws, feathers, bones, and hind legs" of some creature that remains unidentified today. Locals once again hoped that the Devil was dead, but it proved to be wishful thinking. In 1959, two sisters saw the creature at their Bridgeton home, and several boys were fined $50 for illegally hunting the Devil around Wall Township.

The year 1960 brought reports of eerie cries, strange footprints, and rustling bushes from Dorothy, May's Landing, and Mullica Hill. Camden merchants offered $10,000 for the Devil's capture, proposing to build a zoo for it, but that reward—and another of $100,000—brought no results. In 1961, two couples parked on a lover's lane in the Pine Barrens claimed that a screeching, winged monster had damaged their car. Two years later, hunters

near Lake Atsion, in the Wharton State Forest, heard screams in the woods and found weird 11-in. footprints.

The Jersey Devil returned with a vengeance in 1966, killing pets, poultry, and livestock along the Mullica River. Its final tally included 31 ducks, four cats, three geese, and two dogs. One of the dogs, a 90-lb. German shepherd, was found with its throat torn out and dragged a quarter-mile from home. A state trooper sent to investigate the attacks found giant footprints, but said the soil was too wet to permit plaster casts. In 1969, a motorist at Sweetwater saw the Devil leap across the road in front of his car.

The 1970s were a busy decade for Devil sightings. The beast reportedly pulled a child's hair in Mercer County, during 1970, and killed chickens around Leeds Point the following year. Several witnesses saw a large winged creature flying near Manahawkin in 1973. During 1974, an ambulance driver heard screams in the Barrens, several witnesses saw the Devil cross a highway in Wharton State Forest, and canoeists reported a sighting from Cedar Creek. Williamstown residents blamed the devil for mutilating a horse in 1975, while pigs were slaughtered the following year, at Pedricktown. Other sightings for 1976 emerged from Batsto, Jackson Mills, and Long Branch. Chatsworth produced the first sighting of 1977, followed by an attack on a moving car in Penns Grove, damaged trailers in Tuckerton, and a close encounter with a homeowner in Vincentown. Chatsworth teenagers reported a creature with "red eyes and a bad odor" in 1978, while eerie screams disturbed sleepers in Atsion, Chestnut Neck, and Smithville. A Tabernacle Township couple heard the beast screeching outside their home in 1979 and it also invaded the campus of Stockton State College, in Pomona.

Sightings continued apace through the 1980s, as the Jersey Devil visited New Egypt's streets and rattled sheds in Waretown (1980); frightened young lovers at Atsion Lake and stalked canoeists on the Mullica River (1981); screamed at homeowners in Paisley (1983); chased loggers out of the woods near Chatsworth (1984); landed on rooftops in South River and South Toms River (1986); slaughtered a dog and left strange tracks in Vineland (1987); and harassed a camper at Bamber Lake (1989).

The 1990s were busier still, beginning with more reports from Fort Dix in May 1990. In 1991, classic Jersey Devils with wings, horselike heads, and hooves frightened witnesses in Burlington, Edison, and Erial. Fort Dix endured another visit in 1992, as did Atlantic City and Chatsworth. Sightings for 1993 included incidents at Forked River, Wall Township, Winslow Township, and in Wharton State Park. Residents of Jackson and Wildwood claimed frightening encounters in 1994, with reports extending to Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Scary noises and footprints worried residents of Brick in 1995, and a driver saw the Devil hopping along Route 287 near Pompton Lakes. Medford Park and Mount Misery produced sightings in 1996, while flying creatures swarmed around Magnolia, Southampton, Wall Township and the Batona Trail in 1997. At least four witnesses reported sightings around Leeds Point in 1998.

Ninety years after the Jersey Devil's hectic week in 1909, another historic rash of sightings occurred. The reports began at Mount Misery in February, spreading to Bamber Lake in March and Leeds Point in July, then exploded during autumn with nine sightings between October 2 and December 3. During that period, witnesses met the Devil twice at Bamber Lake, in Jacksonville, on Cape May Avenue in Atlantic County, in Ramsey, twice at Forked River, at Stoney Brook, and Moorestown. Christmas weekend was disrupted by reports from Pomona, Dover Township, and Westmont.

Any hopes that the Jersey Devil might vanish at the end of the 20th century were dashed in 2000, with 20 new sightings. The first occurred in Pennsylvania, on January 10, followed by others at Leeds Point, Mays Landing, Holmdel, Philadelphia, Great Meadows, Morristown, Toms River, Bayonne, Paramus, Gibbstown, Sea Breeze, Atlantic City, Hillsboro, the Wharton State Forest, Whiting, and South Hampton. Years of peace followed those incidents, but a "gargoyle-like creature with bat wings" returned in 2007, visiting Freehold, Mount Laurel, and Moorestown. On January 23, 2008 a farmer in Litchfield, Pennsylvania, claimed that the Jersey Devil had perched on his barn.

Various theories have been offered to explain the Jersey Devil. They include:

- *Hoaxes:* In addition to the winged kangaroo in 1909, it was proved that mysterious footprints found in the Pine Barrens during 1952 were produced with a stuffed bear's paw attached to a stick. Granting the possibility that other witnesses among the 2,300 on record may also have lied or mistaken known animals for something supernatural, the fact remains that many of those witnesses were law enforcement officers, government agents, ministers, respected businessmen, and others whose livelihood depended on their reputation for truthfulness.
- *A deformed child:* Author Jack Boucher, in his book *Absegami Yesteryear* (1963), suggested that the Devil's legend sprang from the actual birth of a disfigured infant. While perfectly plausible, the theory fails to explain sightings of distinctly nonhuman creatures spanning more than 270 years.
- *Reclusive humans:* Professional tracker and author Tom Brown Jr. has spent extensive time in the Pine Barrens, living off the land and sometimes coating his body with mud to repel mosquitoes. On several occasions, he encountered hikers who mistook him for the Jersey Devil and were frightened. It is possible that some sightings over the past three centuries refer to hermits, and a 1993 episode of *The X-Files* suggested that Jersey Devils were in fact a tribe of primitive forest-dwelling humans. Once again, however, the majority of witnesses depict creatures bearing no resemblance to a human being.
- *Birds:* The most logical flying suspects must be birds—but of what species? One theorist proposed the black scoter, a sea duck common along North America's coastlines, but those birds average only 19 in. tall and weigh around 2 lbs. Mistaking one of them for a horse-headed creature 4–8 ft. tall seems highly unlikely. A more likely prospect, the sandhill crane, may stand 4 ft. tall and display a 7-ft. wingspan; their range includes New Jersey. Yet another possibility, one that has been rejected by mainstream science, may involve an unknown giant species like the thunderbirds reported from nearby Pennsylvania. (See section 6.)
- *Prehistoric survivors:* An expert identified only as Professor Bralhopf has allegedly claimed that at least one set of Jersey Devil tracks "were made by some prehistoric animal form the Jurassic period," but the professor—like the beast itself—remains untraceable. Likewise, we have no name at all for a supposed "expert from the Smithsonian Institute" who reportedly suggested that the Devil was a pterosaur surviving underground.
- *Bigfoot:* While most descriptions of the Jersey Devil bear no resemblance to Bigfoot, Gibbsboro's "hairy man" of 1951 was a close match. Author Rick Berry, in *Bigfoot on the East Coast* (1993), reports 39 primate sightings from New Jersey between 1894 and 1981. The Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization lists 41 sightings from 13 New Jersey counties between August 1966 and February 2007.

- *Another unknown species:* Some researchers contend that a creature fitting the Devil's classic description—winged and long-necked, with a horse-like head and hooves—may actually exist, but if so, it resembles nothing known among living species or from the fossil record.
- *The "essence of evil":* Falling back on superstition, coupled with vague supposed sightings on the eve of major wars, this theory proposes a demonic entity existing as a living omen of disaster. An article from the *Pennsylvania Gazette* published in October 1730 described a witch trial occurring at Mount Holly, New Jersey; believers leap from that report to suggest that the original Mrs. Leeds was a witch who gave birth to the Devil's child. In fact, however, the *Gazette's* owner and publisher, Benjamin Franklin, penned the article as a joke.

Further Reading: Girard, G. *Tales of the Jersey Devil*. (Moorestown, NJ: Middle Atlantic Press, 1994); McCloy, J., and J. Miller. *Phantom of the Pines*. (Moorestown, NJ: Middle Atlantic Press, 1998).

LIZARD MEN

Low-budget horror films commonly portray reptiles in human form, or humans who have been transformed into scaly monsters. Examples include *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954), *Revenge of the Creature* (1957), *The Alligator People* (1959), *The Hideous Sun Demon* (1959), *The Reptile* (1966), *Night of the Cobra Woman* (1972), and *The Legend of Gator Face* (1996). Surprisingly, however, claims of scaly humanoids are not confined to scripts from Hollywood—and they predate the invention of the first crude movie camera by nearly a decade.

In October 1878, newspapers reported that a wild man had been caught in Tennessee and shipped to Louisville, Kentucky for public display. According to those reports, the prisoner's "whole body was covered with a layer of scales, which drop off at regular periods, in the spring and fall, like the skin of a rattlesnake." (In fact, no one had seen the creature during spring.) Aside from scales, the captive had a heavy growth of hair on its head and a 6-in. beard, frightful eyes "twice the size of the average-sized eye," and webbed toes. He stood 6 ft., 5 in. tall and required frequent dousings with water to keep his skin moist. The wild man ate raw fish, but preferred all the rest of his food to be cooked.

A later report, from February 1879, guessed that the man fish was 50 years old, describing him as "shrunken and withered, of a dead ashen-gray appearance, except here and there, where he is brownish or blackish." His face was "red and shining," while his hair was "very thin and dead looking." Amazingly, the article claimed that "he is married, and is the father of several children," blaming the subject's condition on ichthyosis (a skin disease that creates the appearance of scales).

Was the mystery solved? Not quite.

While the Tennessee man fish may have suffered from a rare but well-known skin disease, reports of large, bipedal reptiles do not end with a single 19th-century case. Modern reports of lizard man encounters include the following:

- *October 1954:* Renzo Pugina, a resident of Parravicino d'Erba, Italy, was frightened by a scaly, luminous biped that appeared outside his home one night, flashing a beam

Witnesses report sightings of reptilian humanoids in the United States and Canada. (Credit: William Rebsamen)

of light at Pugina that left him semi-paralyzed. It then flew away, leaving an oily spot on the ground where it had stood.

- *August 1955:* While swimming in the Ohio River near Evansville, Indiana, Mrs. Darwin Johnson was grabbed and repeatedly pulled underwater by something that felt like a clawed hand clutching her leg. She finally escaped, with green stains and deep scratches on her skin. She never saw the creature, but author Loren Coleman considers her assailant a reptilian cryptid.
- *November 1958:* Charles Wetzel was driving on North Main Street in Riverside, California when a humanoid figure covered with scales like leaves leaped onto the hood of his car, staring and gurgling at Wetzel through the windshield. It had a round head, shining eyes, a protruding mouth, and long arms tipped with claws that left scratches on Wetzel's windshield when it finally fell off the car.
- *Autumn 1966:* A young resident of Stephensport, Kentucky woke to strange sounds outside his house at 1:30 A.M. Peering through his window, he saw a lizard-man approximately 6 ft. tall, brownish-green in color, with webbed fingers and toes. There was "a ridge-like feature which started on the forehead and ran back over the top of its head, kind of peaked at the top." Glimpsing the witness, the creature turned and ran toward nearby Sinking Creek, a tributary of the Ohio River.
- *August 1972:* Witnesses Robin Flewellyn and Gordon Pike reported seeing a 5-ft. scaly biped at Thetis Lake, British Columbia. They described it as a "gill man" or "cousin of the Creature from the Black Lagoon." Pike grappled with the beast, slashing his hand on one of six sharp spines protruding from its head. Police were investigating that case when witnesses Mike Gold and Russell Van Nice saw the creature. Silver scales covered its human body, while its head featured large ears, a monster face, and a point on top.
- *June 1988:* Dozens of witnesses in Lee County, South Carolina, claimed sightings of a reptilian biped in or around Scape Ore Swamp, near Bishopville. It was greenish-black, about 7 ft. tall, and left webbed footprints that biologists said must be fakes. Alleged witness Kenneth Orr claimed the creature had attacked him, giving police a handful of bloody scales to prove his story, but later admitted faking the incident "to keep the

legend of the Lizard Man alive." Authorities jailed Orr for illegally carrying a concealed pistol.

- *December 1988:* Two Italian witnesses—a farmer at Torre Orsaia, Salerno, and a security guard in Lomagna, Como—reported nocturnal meetings with tall, scaly, humanoid creatures. The first beast had "serpent-like eyes" and briefly pursued the witness, while the other fled into nearby woods and vanished.
- *1993:* Two residents of La Crosse, Wisconsin, searching for their lost dog after nightfall, met a man-sized biped covered with "mud-colored scales." Its eyes appeared "yellow and slitted" in their flashlight beams.
- *Mid-1990s:* An employee of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources saw "a shiny, green-scaled, man-sized figure—a reptile man," on Highway 13 south of Medford. According to authors Linda Godfrey and Richard Hendricks, who summarized the tale in *Weird Wisconsin* (2005), "As he got within several yards, wings suddenly snapped out from behind the creature's back. It went vertical, zooming straight up and over the vehicle, landing on the road behind him."
- *February 2008:* Bishopville, South Carolina, residents feared that their lizard man had returned after some night-prowling creature mauled Dixie Rawson's van, leaving bite marks and bloodstains on the grill and body. Speculation quickly focused on the lizard man of 1988, while Sheriff E. J. Melvin blamed the vandalism on a coyote. Soon afterward, hikers found a dead coyote and a cow's carcass in a pasture near Rawson's home, with no indication of how either animal died. Sheriff Melvin asked reporters, "If the coyote did this damage, what killed the coyote and the cow? Was it the Lizard Man? I don't know." DNA tests identified the blood from Rawson's van as a common dog's, but locals remain skeptical, since dogs do not normally gnaw on parked cars to the point of self-injury.

Further Reading: Arnold, N. *Monster!* (Bideford, North Devon: CFZ Press, 2007), pp. 216–18, 294–95, 304, 317.

LOVELAND FROG

Reported periodically over the past half-century, the Loveland Frogs—also known as Loveland Lizards—are not normal amphibians or reptiles. In fact, they have more in common with the Lizard Men examined previously than with typical frogs or lizards. Despite repeated sightings, the creatures remain unidentified and ignored by mainstream science.

As in so many cases, Native American legends preceded modern sightings. Shawnee tribesmen living in the area of modern Loveland, Ohio—15 miles northeast of Cincinnati—feared a creature known as *Shawnahooc* ("river demon"), which inhabited the Little Miami River. Hunting parties fired arrows at the creature, which resembled a man-sized reptile that walked on two legs, but it suffered no harm. Shamans disagreed on whether the beast was a devil or a guardian spirit of nature, but members of the tribe avoided the Little Miami thereafter.

The first modern sighting occurred at 3:30 A.M. on May 25, 1955. Robert Hunnicutt saw three strange creatures crouching beside a road outside Branch Hill, Ohio (near

Loveland). They were approximately 3 ft. tall and had faces like frogs, with wide, thin-lipped mouths. Wrinkles took the place of hair atop their heads, and their bare chests were "lop-sided." One of the figures held some kind of metal bar or rod above its head, giving off sparks. Hunnicutt stopped and watched them for several minutes, noting an odor of "fresh-cut alfalfa with a slight trace of almonds," then drove into Loveland and alerted Police Chief John Fritz. Fritz drove to the scene and found nothing, but still described Hunnicutt as sincere.

In July 1955, a civil defense engineer was driving across the Little Miami in Loveland when he saw four similar creatures on a riverbank beneath the bridge. Details of that sighting are sparse, but the description generally matched Robert Hunnicutt's, minus the spark-throwing wand. A month later and 200 miles further west, Mrs. Darwin Johnson reported her encounter with an unseen creature that grabbed her leg, while she was swimming in the Ohio River. (See "Lizard Men" above.) The Little Miami is a tributary of the Ohio.

No more was heard of the Loveland Frogs for 17 years until 1:00 A.M. on March 3, 1972. Loveland policemen Mark Matthews and Ray Shockey saw what they thought was a dog crossing Riverside Road in front of their car. A closer look revealed a frog-faced creature 3–4 ft. tall, weighing an estimated 50–75 lbs. It leaped over a guardrail into the Little Miami River, leaving the officers with an impression of skin-like leather, or possibly skin covered with wet, matted hair. The patrolmen called for backup, but searchers found only drag marks on the river bank.

Two weeks later, on March 17, a different Loveland patrolman saw an object lying in the middle of Riverside Road and stopped to clear it from the pavement. As he stepped from his patrol car, the thing rose to a crouch, eyes shining in the glare of headlights, then hobbled toward the guardrail and climbed over it. The officer drew his pistol and fired, but apparently missed, and the creature escaped once again to the Little Miami. His description of the thing matched that of the other patrolmen, except that the creature seemed somewhat more upright in stature.

While none of these sightings was publicly broadcast, word leaked out from Loveland to members of the Ohio UFO Investigators League (OUFOIL), who interviewed the officers in 1973. The researchers also questioned other local residents and uncovered the story of a farmer who saw a similar creature in March 1972. Although the investigators treated the sightings as a UFO case, no reports of unidentified flying objects accompanied the Loveland Frog reports.

Another 17 years elapsed before the next recorded incidents, in 1999. Both accounts are suspect, since they come from anonymous witnesses who admit drinking large amounts of liquor prior to the alleged sightings. The first event, in August 1999, allegedly occurred near "the old Wendle place" on the Little Miami. Witness "Steve" was on the verge of passing out from alcohol consumption when he saw "a giant frog" rise out of the river. A month later, two drinkers idling along the Little Miami heard splashing in the water and observed "a big green thing" that frightened them away. On July 4, 2002, witness Jude Tillery and a friend reportedly embarked on a rafting trip down the Little Miami, starting from Wilmington, Ohio, 26 miles upriver from Loveland. Again, Tillery admitted drinking heavily before he saw a "big frog-looking dude" standing upright on the river bank.

Fact or fiction?

Skeptics naturally dismiss the last three stories, but are hard-pressed to ignore sightings by three trained law enforcement officers in 1972. Solutions proposed by various theorists include:

- *Hoaxes:* The Hollywood lizard-man film *Revenge of the Creature,* a sequel to 1954's *Creature from the Black Lagoon,* hit U.S. theaters two weeks before Robert Hunnicutt's sighting in May 1955. Author George Eberhart suggests that pranksters may have dressed up in costumes inspired by the movie, but no proof exists to confirm it.
- *A great gray owl:* This theory is proposed by cryptozoologist Chris Orrick to explain the March 1972 police sightings. Adult specimens have the largest facial disk found on any known bird of prey, and the record specimen measured 33 in. tall when standing at rest, with a 56-in. wingspan. The face is gray, with yellow eyes surrounded by darker circles, but the owls have normal beaks (no wide-lipped mouths). Ohio lies several hundred miles outside the birds' normal range, and it seems rather unlikely that three policemen would mistake a bird for a bipedal amphibian with slender arms.
- *Lizards:* Author Neil Arnold states with apparent confidence that "the Loveland Frog was nothing more than a prowling lizard, but also the prime example of how spook stories get out of hand as they are passed around." Without citing his source, Arnold reports that the officer who fired at the Loveland Frog on March 17 later told OUFOIL investigators: "The animal I saw was some sort of lizard that someone probably had as a pet and got tired of it." No evidence exists to support or contradict that explanation, published for the first time in 2007.
- *Unknown primates:* The reference to wet, matted hair in some Loveland Frog descriptions prompts suggestions that the creatures may not be amphibians or reptiles at all, but rather some species of North American ape unknown to science.
- *Coelophysis:* Late crypto-researcher Jon-Erik Beckjord suggested that the Loveland Frogs might be surviving specimens of *coelophysis,* 10-ft.-long bipedal dinosaurs presumed extinct for some 200 million years. Unlike the creatures seen at Loveland, though, coelophysis had a long, prominent tale. Critics lump this theory together with other wild claims from Beckjord, including claims that Nessie (section 5) was a pet left on earth by aliens from outer space, and that the Patterson film of an alleged Bigfoot (section 4) shows a white kid riding piggy-back on Bigfoot's shoulders.
- *"Mutant Melonheads":* The last theory seems as wild as Beckjord's, but it has a more reputable source, having appeared in *Cleveland Scene* magazine on October 25, 2006. The article recounted an urban legend from Kirtland, Ohio—224 miles northeast of Loveland—involving a tribe of melonheads created by one Dr. Crow during bizarre experiments on children, conducted at an early 1900s orphanage on Kirtland's Wisner Road. As in so many horror films, the mutant victims finally rebelled against their creator, killed him, and escaped into the countryside, where some reputedly survive today. Alleged witness Jeff B., writing to the *Creepy Cleveland* Web site, claims to have seen a short, pale melonhead attack a dog outside his home on Wisner Road. Presumably, the human monsters could have found their way to Loveland by the 1950s, but proof of the tale remains lacking.

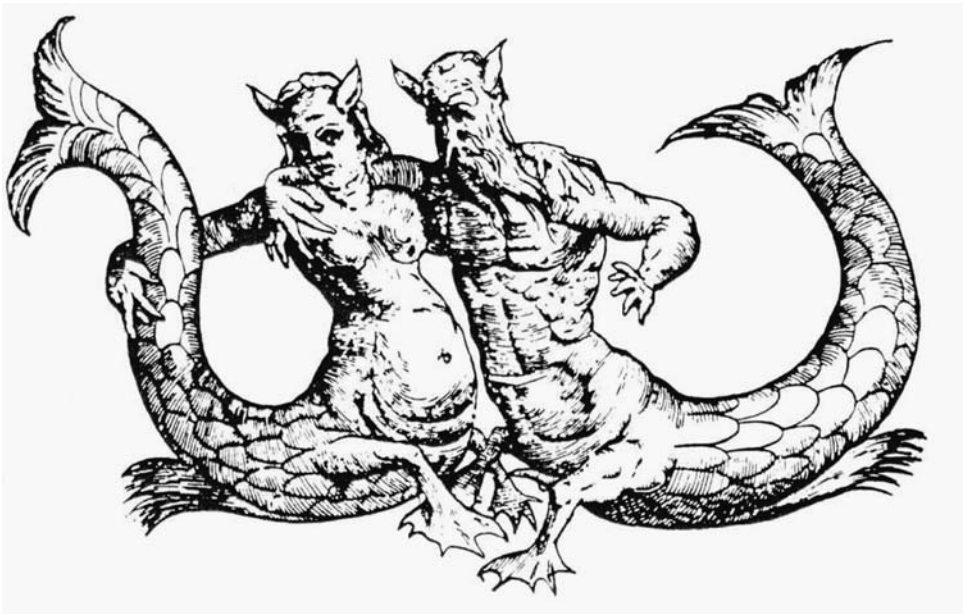
Further Reading: Arnold, N. *Monster!* (Bideford, North Devon: CFZ Press, 2007), pp. 221–22; Clark, J. *Unexplained!* (Detroit: Visible Ink, 1993), pp. 327–29.

MERBEINGS

Merbeings (or merfolk) are legendary humanoid creatures said to inhabit earth's oceans and seas. Their generic name comes from the Old English word *mere* ("sea"), and individual specimens are generally described in terms of their supposed sex, as a mermaid or a merman.

Mermaid legends are found in every culture that historically had access to the seas. The first known stories, from ancient Assyria in the Middle East, began circulating around 1000 B.C.E. The tales involved the goddess Semiramis, who fell in love with a mortal shepherd and was so embarrassed that she leapt into a lake to drown herself. Instead, she was transformed into a hybrid mermaid, human from the waist up, with a fish's tail. Babylonians knew Semiramis as the mermaid-goddess Atargatis, while ancient Greeks and Phoenicians called her Derketo. Residents of the Akkadian Empire worshipped Ea, a fish-tailed god who lived in the Red Sea. The Greek philosopher Anaximander (610–546 B.C.E.) believed that humans had evolved from ocean-dwelling creatures, some of which survived in semi-human form.

Merbeing legends are not by any means confined to the Middle East. The *silenus* was a freshwater merman said to frequent rivers in northern Turkey. Residents of Eastern Europe and Russia knew two different species, the *rusalka* and *vodyany*. Southern Europe claimed the *nereid*, while northern Europe and Scandinavia harbored the *nix* and the *havmand*. Scotland's "blue men of the minch" inhabited the Hebrides archipelago, while shape-



Witnesses report merbeings of both sexes and various sizes. (Author's collection)

shifting *selkies* preferred the Orkney and Shetland Islands. Africa hosted two merbeings: the *mambu mutu* dwelled in Lake Tanganyika and surrounding rivers, while the *mami water* occupied the Niger River and its tributaries. Farther east, the dwarf *kappa* swam in Japanese rivers and lakes, while the *ri* patrolled waters around New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Filipinos recognized the male *siyokoy* and female *sirena*.

New World was not without its own merbeings. Micmac tribesmen of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick heard the *sabawaelnu* sing before storms. In British Columbia, Haida fishermen dreaded the two-tailed *tchimose*, which tipped their canoes. Ohio's Miami tribesmen feared the *mänsanzhi*, while Maine's Passamaquoddy natives drew pictographs of small *unágemes*. South America also teemed with merbeings, including Chile's *shompallhue*, Brazil's *ipupiara*, and the *mene mamma*, found from the Caribbean southward through Guyana, Brazil and Argentina.

All were legends. Or, were they?

Throughout the world, sightings and captures of merbeings have been recorded from ancient times to the present. Some of the cases include:

- During the reign of Emperor Julius Caesar (27 B.C.E. to 14 C.E.), Rome's lieutenant governor in Gaul (now France) reported, "many of these Nereides or Mermaides were seen cast up upon the sands, and lying dead."
- While Tiberius was emperor of Rome (14–37 C.E.), visitors from Ulyssipon (now Lisbon, Portugal) reported that "a certain sea goblin called Triton" was found dead on shore. During the same period, Roman soldiers claimed that a merman tried to board one of their ships near Gades (now Cadíz, Spain), and others reported the stranding of 300 sea monsters, including "many meremaids" at Lyon, in France.
- *558:* An Irish fisherman named Beoan caught a mermaid near Ollarbha.
- *1118:* Irish fishermen caught two more mermaids, at Ossory and Port-Lairge.
- *1197:* British fishermen at Oreford, Suffolk, netted "a fish . . . resembling in shape a wild or savage man" and delivered it to Sir Bartholome de Glanville, who kept it alive on a diet of fish until the creature managed to escape. The merman was bald but had a bushy beard and hairy chest, with "all his limbs and members resembling the right proportion of a man."
- *1403:* A mermaid was stranded and captured alive after dykes collapsed and flooded the Dutch town of Edam. The creature lived for 15 years in captivity at Haarlem and learned to obey simple orders.
- *1493:* While exploring the Caribbean, Christopher Columbus "saw three sirens that rose high out of the sea, but were not as beautiful as they are represented."
- *1523:* Fishermen on the Adriatic Sea captured a merbeing and delivered it to Rome. It was the size of a 5-year-old child and looked "like a man even to the navel, except the ears; in other parts it resembled a fish." It was also displayed to the public in Antwerp, Belgium.
- *1554:* Portuguese settler Baltasar Ferreira found an *ipupiara* on the beach near São Vicente, Brazil and killed it with his sword. He reported that it had a full head of hair plus whiskers, and tail fins at the rear.

- *1556:* French priest André Thevet described the stranding of two merbeings on the West African coast.
- *1560:* A Spanish doctor and several priests reported the capture of seven mermaids and mermen on the coast of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).
- *1565:* German travelers at Thora, on the Red Sea, saw the preserved skin of a mermaid, complete with human torso and fish's tail.
- *Early 1600s:* Dutch anatomist Pieter Pauw (1564–1617) dissected a merman captured by members of the Dutch East Indies Company (organized in 1602) off the coast of Brazil. He described it as having a human head and torso, while the lower body was "shapeless." Danish scientist Thomas Bartholin (1616–80) obtained some of the creature's ribs and one arm, including a hand with webbed fingers and large knuckles, for inclusion in his "cabinet of curiosities" displayed in Copenhagen.
- *1608:* British navigator Henry Hudson saw a mermaid with "very white" skin and long black hair, plus the tail of a fish, near the Russian archipelago of Novaya Zemlya.
- *1610:* British explorer Sir Richard Whitbourne saw a merman with blue hair swimming in the harbor at St. John's, Newfoundland. It tried to climb aboard one of Whitbourne's boats, but retreated when a crewman struck it with an oar.
- *1614:* Six years after he was saved from execution by Pocahontas, British sea captain John Smith met a mermaid in the Caribbean. She had "large eyes, rather round, a finely shaped nose (a little too short), well-formed ears, rather too long, and her long green hair imparted to her an original character by no means unattractive." Smith was smitten until he saw that "from the waist down the woman gave way to the fish."
- *1672:* Author John Josselyn reported that a merman had tried to board a boat owned by a fisherman named Mitten at Casco Bay, on the Gulf of Maine. Mitten repelled it by cutting off one of its hands with a hatchet.
- *1652:* Dutch sailors saw a merman and a mermaid swimming together in the Celebes Sea, between Borneo and Seram in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).
- *1682:* French anthropologist Benoît de Maillet described the capture of a sea-man at Sestri, Italy. The creature was human in appearance, but had inch-long moss atop its head in place of hair.
- *1714:* Sailors saw "a sort of marine-man" with bluish-gray skin and a "fisher's cap of moss on its head," swimming in West Africa's Gulf of Guinea.
- *1717:* Belgian publisher Louis Renard released drawings of a mermaid captured near Amboine Island, in the Dutch East Indies. It squeaked like a mouse, had skin the color of kelp, and possessed webbed, four-jointed fingers. The thing refused food and died in captivity.
- *1793:* Governor A. I. van Imbyse van Battenberg of Berbice (now Guyana) described his country's river-dwelling *mene mamma* mermaids to British physician Colin Chisolm.
- *1797:* William Munro, a teacher at Thurso in Caithness, Scotland, wrote to *The Times of London*, reporting that he had seen a mermaid basking on coastal rocks at Sandside Bay. Its upper body resembled "an unclothed human female," and its face was plump, with ruddy cheeks and blue eyes.

- *1811:* Two witnesses signed a sworn affidavit describing their encounter with a mermaid at Campbelltown, Scotland.
- *1814:* Two fisherman from Portgordon, in Morayshire, Scotland, saw a merman and his mate swimming offshore.
- *1817:* Sailors aboard the *Leonidas* saw a strange creature in the North Atlantic. It was 5 ft. long, with a pale face, black hair, and short arms, a humanoid torso, and a fish's tail. They watched it for six hours, swimming with its upper body held erect, 2 ft. out of the water.
- *1830:* Villagers at Benbecula, in the Outer Hebrides, saw a mermaid "in the form of a woman in miniature" on shore. Failing to capture it, they pelted it with stones. A few days later, its corpse washed ashore. Examination revealed that: "The upper part of the body was about the size of a well-developed child of three or four years of age, with an abnormally developed breast. The hair was long, dark and glossy, while the skin was white, soft, and tender. The lower part of the body was like a salmon, but without scales." The local sheriff had a coffin made and supervised the creature's burial.
- *1833:* Dr. Robert Hamilton, a professor of natural history at Edinburgh University, reported that Scottish fishermen had captured a mermaid off Yell, in the Shetland Islands, and held it for three hours while compiling a detailed description. The creature had a monkey-like face with short hair on its scalp, a woman's torso, and a tail "resembling that of a dogfish." They released the creature when it began making "plaintive little moans."
- *1840s:* Future novelist Ivan Turgenev told friends that he had been chased by a merbeing known as *rusálka,* while hunting along Ukraine's Desna River.
- *1870:* A Micmac tribesman found a young *sabawaelnu* stranded on the coast of Nova Scotia at low tide. Its head was only 3 in. in diameter, and it had tiny hands. The witness carried it into deeper water and released it.
- *1890:* Newspapers reported that crewmen aboard the *Addie Schaeffer* had netted a 6-ft.-long mermaid, while fishing 300 miles offshore from St. Augustine, Florida. The thing was "pure white and scaleless. The head and face are wonderfully human in shape and feature. The shoulders are well outlined and very much resemble those of a woman, and the bosom is well defined and shows considerable development." It also had four flippers, in place of arms and legs. The mermaid died after two days in captivity, and was reportedly preserved in alcohol pending donation to the Smithsonian Institution, which apparently never received it.
- *1894:* In March, a New Hampshire fisherman allegedly saw three mermaids and a merman swimming offshore.
- *1894:* Seven months after the New Hampshire sighting, two "nondescript creatures horrible in appearance and habit" appeared on a sandbar in the Ohio River, near Vevay, Indiana. Witnesses described them as resembling "huge lizards with human features," but newspapers dubbed them "mud mermaids." The creatures had "strikingly human" faces, four limbs with clawed hands or feet, and tapering hindquarters "that in no way resembles a tail." Some editors claimed a hoax after a Kentucky witness, J. M. Ozier, compared the things to a "What-Is-It" displayed in P. T. Barnum's sideshow.

- *1900:* Alexander Gunn saw a mermaid at Sandwood Bay, Scotland. It was the size of a human adult, with curly, reddish-yellow hair and prominent brows over greenish-blue eyes.
- *1921:* Witnesses saw a creature with a woman's upper body and a fish's tail near Dassen Island, off the coast of South Africa's Western Cape Province.
- *Early 1930s:* A Scandinavian hunter glimpsed a green-haired mermaid with beaming eyes in the Strait of Magellan near Punta Arenas, Chile. He reported that it cried aloud with a "sad voice."
- *1937:* A merman described as "very fair and beautiful" washed ashore on southwestern India's Malabar coast. Officials were summoned to see the creature before it escaped to the sea.
- *1950s:* Workmen found the mummified remains of a supposed *kappa* while remodeling a brewery in Imari, Saga Prefecture, on the Japanese island of Kyūshū. The small relic, originally found in a black box, may still be viewed at the Matsuura Brewery.
- *1957:* While sailing by raft from Tahiti to Chile, Eric de Bisschop reported a mermaid sighting by one of his crewmen. The creature supposedly boarded Bisschop's raft and grappled with the sailor, who was left with fish scales clinging to his arms.
- *1960–62:* Witnesses at Kilconly Point, in Ireland's County Kerry, filed repeated sightings of a mermaid whose upper body resembled a woman's.
- *1961:* Multiple witnesses reported mermaid sightings from the Isle of Man, midway between Scotland and Ireland in the Irish Sea. The mayor of Peel was among those who saw the creature. A reward for its capture was never collected.
- *1962:* Two Irish farmers from Ashdee, County Kerry, reported a mermaid sighting. Both swore that the creature was not a seal.
- *1967:* Ferry passengers reported a mermaid sitting on rocks at the entrance to Active Pass, near Victoria, British Columbia. They described it as having long, blonde hair, a female human's upper body, and a tail like a dolphin's. When seen, it was eating a salmon.

Various explanations are advanced for sightings of merbeings through the years. They include:

- *Sirenians:* This order of aquatic mammals includes the dugong and six species or subspecies of manatees. All have flippers as forelimbs, with paddle-like tails. Their hindlimbs have vanished during 50 million years of evolution, leaving only small vestigial bones concealed within muscle and fat. Dugongs inhabit coastal waters from East Africa to India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Australia, New Guinea and Palau. Smaller populations may also be found in the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. One species of manatee lives along Africa's western coastline and in rivers that feed the Atlantic. The other species and subspecies are confined to the Western Hemisphere, ranging from Brazil's Amazon River and Rio Aripuanã, through the Caribbean to Florida, but certain individuals have strayed as far as New York City and Boston on the East Coast, and up the Mississippi River to Memphis, Tennessee. Most researchers agree that the "sirens" seen by Columbus in 1493 were mana-

tees, and sirenians are broadly cited as "mermaid" suspects even in areas where none should be found. In 1983, members of the International Society of Cryptozoology photographed the legendary *ri* at Ramat Bay on New Ireland, concluding that it was a dugong. That judgment was confirmed in 1985 when a local hunter killed a specimen and dragged it ashore.

- *Pinnipeds:* In cold-water regions where sirenians cannot thrive, theorists suggest that merbeing witnesses have actually seen members of the pinniped ("fin-feet") family, including seals, sea lions, and walruses. Scotland's *selkies* are said to be able to change from human form to that of a seal, suggesting possible confusion between swimmers and actual pinnipeds. Since experienced sailors and fishermen are familiar with known pinnipeds, some cryptozoologists suggest that merbeings may represent an unknown species of seal with facial features resembling a human's.
- *Sami boatmen:* The Sami (or Saami) people are indigenous residents of Sápmi, a cultural region including parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Traditionally, many made their living as fishermen, and they often dressed in seal skins for warmth while paddling their kayaks at sea. Some early mermaid sightings may represent encounters with the Sami, mistaken for supernatural creatures.
- *Deformed humans:* The disease sirenomelia, also known as "mermaid syndrome," is a rare birth defect wherein infants are born with their legs fused together, resembling the hindquarters of a manatee. Victims of sirenomelia normally die soon after birth, and only four living victims of the disease were known to science as this book went to press. While it seems unlikely that victims of sirenomelia would ever be found swimming at sea, occasional births of such deformed infants might theoretically foster mermaid legends.
- *Hoaxes:* Artificially created relics, such as the "Jenny Haniver" and "Feejee (or Fiji) Mermaid" have long been recognized as the work of hoaxers. Jenny Hanivers are created by drying and varnishing the remains of various rays, skates, or guitarfish, which take on the appearance of weird, vaguely humanoid unknowns. The Feejee Mermaid is somewhat more complex, usually employing the mummified remains of a monkey and fish, sewn together with various papier-mâché accessories to create "genuine" mermaid carcasses. Showman P. T. Barnum displayed such specimens in touring sideshows and at his American Museum in New York City from 1842 through 1864. Today, fake mermaids can be purchased online from various Web sites.
- *Primitive or unclassified primates:* Researcher Mark Hall suggests that the prehistoric *Oreopithecus* ("hill-ape," in Latin) may have survived its presumed extinction some five million years ago and evolved into an aquatic species with webbed hands and feet. Fossil remains found in Italy and East Africa suggest that *Oreopithecus* weighed 66–77 lbs. and lived (despite its name) in swampy environments. While mainstream science rejects Hall's theory, authors Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe go farther yet, in their *Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide* (1999). They lump merbeings with eight other species of unclassified hominoids, concluding that these sea-dwellers are "perhaps the most traditional of all the undiscovered nonhuman primates." They further divide merbeings into two groups: marine creatures "distinguished by a finlike appendage," and freshwater species displaying "an angular foot with a high instep and three pointed toes." In addition to

classic mermaids and mermen, Coleman and Huyghe also list the chupacabra (see section 7) as a merbeing, despite the fact that no reports on record describe it as living in water.

No explanation for merbeings yet proposed explains the strange case of Francesco de la Vega, born in 1657 at Liérjanes, in northern Spain. As a child, Vega loved the sea, and he swam in the nearby Bay of Biscay whenever possible. One day, he disappeared and was presumed to have drowned, but the story took a strange turn in 1679, when fishermen caught a merman off the coast of Cádiz, in the southwestern corner of Spain, some 800 miles from Liérjanes by sea.

They took their catch to a local monastery, where monks determined that the creature was a man, although he was pale and flabby, lacking fingernails and toenails, with rough skin resembling scales along his spine. The merman could speak only one word—"Liérjanes"—and the monks delivered him to the village. On arrival, the strange man went immediately to the former home of Francesco de la Vega, where relatives happily welcomed him, but the merman "showed no sign of affection or recollection, staring at them with chill fishy eyes and receiving their embraces with cold indifference."

Francesco—if it *was* Francesco—remained in Liérjanes for nine years, but he never spoke and disliked wearing clothes. In 1688, he vanished again and never returned to the village, but fishermen later saw a merman matching his description swimming off the coast of Asturias, 120 miles west of Liérjanes. On that occasion, he avoided capture.

Further Reading: Costellto, P. *The Magic Zoo,* (London: Sphere Books, 1979), pp. 34–58.

MINHOCÃO

Giant snakes (see section 1) are not the only large cryptids reported from South America's jungles. Another living mystery is Brazil's *minhocão* ("giant earthworm"), a burrowing beast huge enough to divert rivers, uproot trees, and ruin cultivated fields. While it has never been identified, some researchers believe it may not be a worm at all, but rather something from the prehistoric past.

German doctor and zoologist Johann "Fritz" Müller moved to Brazil in 1852, at age 31, and remained there until his death in 1897. Twenty years before he died, Müller published the first known description of the minhocão in a German scientific journal, recording eyewitness descriptions of an armor-plated creature 163 ft. long and 16 ft. wide that toppled giant trees like blades of grass while tunneling through the soil.

Müller's first report dated from 1849, when a minhocão dug deep trenches on land owned by João de Deos, in the southern Brazilian state of Paraná. The tracks led across country to a rocky plateau, and they were still visible in 1852 when landowner Lebino José dos Santos visited the site. Based on measurements and the placement of the furrows, dos Santos believed two tunneling creatures, each 6 to 9 ft. in diameter, had dug them. Dos Santos also interviewed a local resident who described her sighting of a wormlike creature 80 ft. long and "as big as a house," with two movable horns on its head.

In the 1860s, Müller wrote, a minhocão had terrorized the residents of Lage, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Aside from natives, whom many Europeans refused to trust, witnesses included a German merchant named Friedrich Kelling. Another German, Emil

Odebrecht, saw the minhocão's tracks while surveying a road construction route in the state of Santa Catarina, in southwestern Brazil. The deep trenches were too wide for Odebrecht to step across, but he was able to leap over them. Around the same time, near Curitibanos in Santa Catarina, Antonio José Branco returned from a week-long visit with relatives to find his farm plowed up in furrows 9 ft. wide and 2,600 ft. long, ending in a swamp. The monster's passing had upset some pine trees and stripped bark from others, which still bore the scars when Müller observed them in 1877.

Noting that most minhocão reports came from regions surrounding the Paraná and Uruguay Rivers, Müller wrote: "From all these stories it would appear conclusive that in the high district where the Uruguay and Paraná have their sources, excavations and long trenches are met with, which are undoubtedly the work of some living animal. Generally, if not always, they appear after continuous rainy weather, and seem to start from marshes or river-beds and to enter them again."

From these circumstances, Müller concluded that the minhocão was probably some kind of giant fish, perhaps related to the prehistoric lungfish *Ceratodus* (presumed extinct for 70 million years) or one of its descendants, the South American lungfish. Modern lungfish do inhabit the Paraná River, and they are burrowers, but none on record exceeds 4 ft. in length.

Almost half a century after Müller's article was published, in 1925, British explorer Percy Fawcett vanished forever into the Amazonian jungle. Before he disappeared, however, Fawcett left a written record of many strange creatures described by native tribesmen—and some he had seen first-hand. One reference, which may describe the minhocão without using its name, reads:

> In the Paraguay River there is a freshwater shark, huge but toothless, sake to attack men and swallow them if it gets a chance. They talk here of another river monster—fish or beaver—which can in a single night tear out a huge section of the river bank. The Indians report the tracks of some gigantic animal in the swamps bordering the river, but allege that it has never been seen. The shark exists beyond doubt; as for the other monsters—well, there are queer things yet to be discovered in this continent of mystery. . . . In the Madidi, in Bolivia, enormous tracks have been found, and Indians there talk of a huge creature described at times as half submerged in the swamps.

German author Emil Budde, writing in 1891, suggested that the minhocão might be a relict *Glyptodon*, a prehistoric mammal related to modern anteaters, armadillos, and sloths and presumed extinct for some 10,000 years. No one knows if they were burrowers, but fossil remains show no resemblance to a giant worm or snake. Glyptodons were quadrupeds with large, protective shells resembling a turtle's, composed of more than 1,000 inch-thick bony plates. These did not match the minhocão in size, as the largest Glyptodon on record measured 16 ft. long and weighed some 4,400 lbs. They did share their prehistoric world with early humans, and some paleontologists believe ancient hunters used Glyptodon shells as igloo-type shelters, but science rejects the notion of any surviving to modern times.

Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans, writing in 1958, proposed that the minhocão might be another prehistoric mammal, one of the *Archaeocetes* that evolved into present-day whales. Some of the earliest had legs, and all—like modern whales and porpoises—were air-breathers.

None reached the size attributed to the minhocão, but some were larger than the Glyptodon. Legless *Basilosaurus* grew to 60 ft., and have been proposed as possible "sea serpent" candidates by various authors.

Further Reading: Heuvelmans, B. *On the Track of Unknown Animals,* (London: Kegan Paul, 1995), pp. 356–62.

MONGOLIAN DEATH WORM

The Gobi Desert is Asia's largest, and the third-largest desert on earth, sprawling over 500,000 square miles of China and southern Mongolia. Unlike the larger Sahara and Arabian deserts, much of the Gobi consists of bare rock, rather than shifting sand. It is also considered a cold desert, where winds from the Siberian steppes produce temperatures of -40° F in winter. Summer temperatures normally do not exceed 104° F, compared to 136° for the Sahara and 122° for the Arabian.

In Mongolia, desert travelers reportedly have more to fear from the Gobi than heatstroke or chills. According to natives of the region, a creature known as the death worm or *olgoi khorkhoi* ("intestine worm") waits beneath the surface of sandy regions to spray hapless humans with acidic venom or jolt them with electric shocks.

Witnesses describe the death worm as a reddish-colored creature 2–5 ft. long, thus explaining the intestine reference in its Mongolian name. A yellow species, called *shar khorkhoi,* is also mentioned in some reports, but it appears to be less common. Paleontologist Roy Andrews published the first Western account of the death worm in 1926, in his book *On the Trail of Ancient Man,* but he was skeptical of the creature's existence, noting that none of the Mongolian natives he interviewed had actually seen a specimen.

Czech cryptozoologist Ivan Mackerle has spent more time investigating the death worm than any other researcher, including two eight-week expeditions to Mongolia in 1990 and 1992. Neither trip produced any death worms, but Mackerle collected enough eyewitness reports to complete a documentary for Czech television in 1993 titled "The Sand Monster Mystery." Based on his research, Mackerle made the following observations about the elusive death worm:

- Sightings are most frequent in parts of the Gobi where the goyo plant—a poisonous, parasitic growth often used in native folk medicine—is common.
- Witnesses confirm that the death worm raises half its body off the ground before spitting venom that is fatal on contact, and which corrodes inanimate objects as if it was acid.
- Others insist that the death worm can kill victims by touch. Some cited the example of a geologist who dropped dead while poking the desert sand with an iron rod.
- Gobi nomads live in fear of the mythical creature, citing incidents wherein it has killed camels and other animals, as well as humans.

Based on this information, Mackerle and his colleagues surmised that death worms might somehow draw their venom from the goyo plant, and that the creatures may be able to deliver strong electric shocks. No land-dwelling species known to science defends itself in that manner, but various fish—including 19 species of catfish, 69 species of rays, and

150 species of knifefish—deliver shocks strong enough to stun predators. Some "electric" fish generate 500–650 volts, which may produce contact burns, cause muscle spasms, and disrupt heartbeats or respiration.

In June 2003, British explorers Adam Davies and Andrew Sanderson led another expedition in pursuit of the death worm, beginning at a small museum where a sculpture of the creature is displayed, then moving on to a remote site south of Dalanzagad where several eyewitness reports have been filed. The searchers returned with new sightings, but without a specimen in hand.

Two years later, in May 2005, Britain's Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ) mounted a month-long search for the death worm, including CFZ members Dave Churchill, Christopher Clark, Richard Freeman, and John Hare. As with prior expeditions, the CFZ's "Operation Death Worm" recorded new eyewitness reports but failed to locate the creature itself. Still, they came home convinced of its existence, reporting that "every eyewitness account and story we have heard describes exactly the same thing: a red-brown worm-like snake, approximately two feet long and two inches thick with no discernable head or back (tail)."

Josh Gates and his "Destination Truth" team, on behalf of TV's Sci-Fi Channel, carried out the most recent Gobi expedition in 2007. Their documentary aired on March 12, 2008, once again, without definitive proof of the death worm's existence.

If the creature *does* exist, what could it be? Theories range from the mundane to the bizarre, with proposed death worm candidates including:

- *Snakes:* Twelve species of spitting cobras are recognized by science, with the largest—Ashe's spitting cobra, up to 9 ft. long—only identified in 2007. All cobra bites are potentially fatal, and venom absorbed through the eyes may cause blindness. Certain non-spitting cobras and vipers also fling venom on occasion as a means of self-defense against predators. Some African tribesmen once believed the harmless sand boa was venomous, and it is possible that some Mongolian reports involve a non-venomous burrowing snake.
- *Legless lizards:* Worldwide, at least 170 species of legless worm lizards are recognized by science. None are venomous, and none produce electric shocks. Most do not exceed 6 in. in length, but their resemblance to worms prompts some cryptozoologists to suggest that the Gobi Desert may conceal an unknown giant species.
- *Caecillians:* An order of legless, burrowing amphibians represented by 171 known species worldwide. Smaller species resemble earthworms, while the larger—some approaching 5 ft. long—resemble snakes. All are harmless to humans, and no species are presently known to be living in Mongolia.
- *Giant worms:* Worldwide, at least two dozen species of worms known to science reach lengths rivaling—or far surpassing—the Mongolian death worm. The largest species, the giant Gippsland earthworm, reaches 10 ft. in length. Another Australian species reached 3 ft., 6 in., while a Tasmanian species may be 2 ft. long. Nearby New Zealand's largest worm grows to 4 ft., 7 in. The Kinbalu giant earthworm, found on Borneo and New Guinea, is relatively small, at a record length of 2 ft., 4 in. India hosts three giant species, ranging in length from 16 in. to 3 ft., 6 in. Vietnam claims two giant worms, ranging from 14 in. to 3 ft., 3 in. long. South Africa boasts six giant species, with the largest exceeding 3 ft. in length. In tropical South America, three giant species range

from 3 ft. to 6 ft., 10 in. Even densely populated Europe has four giant species, with the record specimen measuring 3 ft., 4 in. In the United States, the 3-ft. giant Palouse earthworm inhabits parts of Washington and Idaho. None of these large worms presents any danger to humans or livestock, either through venom or electric shocks.

- *"Land electric eels":* This label is doubly misleading, since no true eels deliver electric shocks and no eels live on land. Still, there seems to be no clear reason why a terrestrial creature capable of shocking predators might not exist. A burrowing animal inhabiting one of earth's most remote, underpopulated regions would have a good chance of avoiding scientific detection.
- *"Guardian thoughtforms":* This theory, advanced by certain students of the paranormal, suggests that the death worm may not be a physical creature at all, but rather an entity conjured by magic to protect the secrets of some still-undiscovered ancient civilization that once inhabited the Gobi. Similar paranormal explanations have been offered for other cryptids, including Bigfoot and Nessie. No evidence of the civilization in question—or its guardian thoughtform—presently exists.

Further Reading: Shuker, K. *The Beasts That Hide From Man,* (New York: Paraview Press, 2003), pp. 23–74.

MONKEY MAN

In May 2001, reports of a strange, apelike creature emerged from New Delhi, the crowded capital of India. On May 13, 15 people claimed that a 4-ft.-tall simian creature had attacked them, suffering visible bites, scratches, and bruises. One man died that night as he leaped from a high window to escape the vicious creature.

Fifty attacks were reported on the night of May 14, and another 13 reports were made to police the following day. A second victim, a pregnant woman, died on May 15 when she fell down a flight of apartment house stairs, fleeing shouts from neighbors that "The monkey has come!" Also on May 15, a mob in New Delhi's Noida suburb beat a Hindu mystic and delivered him to police as a Monkey Man suspect. The innocent victim was 4 ft. tall, but bore no resemblance to an ape.

More reports swamped New Delhi police on May 17, and rioters mobbed a second innocent victim on May 18, dragging a motorist from his van and fracturing several of his bones before officers dispersed them. Why onlookers thought an ape would drive a van is anyone's guess. On May 21, police offered a reward of 50,000 rupees ($1,100) for the creature's capture. By May 23, officers had logged 324 sightings, dismissing 260 of them as hoaxes. The other 64 remained unexplained.

Two weeks after the first Monkey Man reports, on May 27, the panic spread to the Indian state of Assam, 900 miles east of New Delhi. There, more than a dozen villagers claimed they had been attacked and injured by "a wolflike Bear Man" with the power to become invisible. Spokesmen for the Assam Science Society dismissed the claims as evidence of mass hysteria.

Police in New Delhi reached the same conclusion in June 2001, after supposed witnesses claimed they had seen Monkey Man boarding a Russian airliner bound for Moscow. Russia's newspaper *Pravda* ("Truth") raised the ante on that fable with a story headlined

"Monkey Man Attacks Russian Airliner." By June 22, most Indian officials agreed that none of the Monkey Man sightings involved any flesh-and-blood creature, dismissing the reports as "mere figment[s] of the imagination of emotionally weak people." Many victims had been injured, but as police told the *Times of India:* "In most of the cases, the injuries were found to be too superficial to arrive at any conclusion. Most of the wounds could have been self-inflicted. It was found many victims changed their statements on several occasions. Psychiatrists concluded most of them were hysterical and could not be relied on."

That might explain the more unusual descriptions of Monkey Man, including references to a beast with steel claws, an ape that changed form to become a large cat, and a hairy creature wearing bandages or headgear resembling a football helmet. One supposed witness, a 35-year-old shopkeeper named Anim Keshri, described Monkey Man as a remote-controlled robot, able to leap from fourth-story windows without injury. Police also suggested, but never proved, that pranksters may have dressed in monkey costumes to amuse themselves during the panic. In one case, doctors said that a victim from Nangloi Jat, west of New Delhi, suffered a rat bite and blamed Monkey Man.

Assuming that Monkey Man never existed, what caused the original 15 reports on May 13, 2001? In the absence of proof, authorities can only speculate. As early as May 16, a senior police official told reporters, "The whole drama was very carefully enacted by the anti-social elements who wanted to test the nerves of the Delhi Police." He specifically blamed secret agents from Pakistan, whose government has been hostile to India since the two countries formally separated in 1947. Once the initial sightings were reported, superstitious panic did the rest, according to official statements. While the spy story failed to convince many readers, most accepted the diagnosis of mass hysteria.

Indeed, some residents of India seemed highly susceptible to panic. Monkey Man is not the only insubstantial creature that has terrorized that nation in the early 21st century. Other examples include:

- A ghost who crawls, reported from Biswan, in the Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh, an Indian state located northwest of New Delhi. There, in July 2002, numerous people complained of the spirit or creature invading their homes, causing headaches and dizziness. One local physician, Dr. S. P. Verma, treated 20 ghost victims in a single week. None of them actually saw their attacker, yet Dr. Verma told reporters, "There certainly is much more to it than meets the eye." Biswan's chief pharmacist, Prmaod Shrivastav, "The entire town has turned insomniac. You will find men, women and children standing on the terrace with torches to ward off the evil spirit."
- A monster man, dubbed *Mooh Nochva,* said to have mauled 36 villagers in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh during July 2002. Witnesses described the creature as covered with long hair, with bloodshot eyes, and long claws like a tiger's. Some also claimed that red and green lights flashed around its body during the attacks. One victim, a woman named Pikkhi, had flesh torn from her face, neck, and arms in deep furrows. Authorities reported sightings from 50 rural villages, some of which were evacuated by their terrified inhabitants.
- The *muhnochwa* ("face-scratcher"), reported from Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, during August 2002. At least 100 persons complained that some unknown flying object had scratched their faces during nocturnal attacks. Fear escalated after a local policeman blamed the incidents on a "technologically developed insect released by anti-social

elements," but the only insect caught during a supposed muhnochwa attack was a harmless grasshopper. Panic became so intense that rioters attacked a police station. Officers fired on the crowd, killing one man and wounding several others. Forestry officials complained of frightened peasants killing squirrels, bats, foxes, hyenas, and wolves. Scientists at the Indian Institute of Technology solved the mystery by blaming muhnochwa incidents on ball lighting (a rare phenomenon involving airborne static electricity).

Monkey Man would not be laid to rest by official disclaimers. The beast, or its twin, surfaced in Patna, 529 miles north of New Delhi, in July 2002. Patna's police chief dismissed newspaper reports of "mysterious monkey attacks" as "pure rumor," denying any official reports, but alleged victims stuck to their stories. Bhagwat Sharan Singh told reporters, "The monkey-man attacked and injured my son-in-law Joginder Singh Friday night when he was sleeping on the rooftop of my house. He (the attacker) looked like a monkey." As in the previous year's incidents, some witnesses described the creature as a machine "handled by anti-social elements to terrorize people." Like the monster man of Ghazipur, some said it "jumped and sparkled red and blue lights."

Some apes and monkeys are aggressive toward humans at times, but none possess steel claws, helmets, or electrical circuits. The majority of analysts insist that Monkey Man and his various imitators were simply products of overactive imaginations.

Further Reading: Arnold, N. *Monster!* (Bideford, North Devon: CFZ Press, 2007), pp. 239–40.

OLD THREE TOES

Between February and October 1948 a mystery unfolded along Florida's Gulf coast. Hundreds of large, three-toed tracks appeared on various beaches and riverbanks, while multiple witnesses reported sightings of large, unknown creatures. Forty years later, a local newspaper solved the riddle with an explanation that really solved nothing at all.

Before examining the creature Floridians dubbed "Old Three Toes," we must note that similar tracks appeared on beaches in southern New Zealand, in Queensland and Tasmania, Australia, Argentina, on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, and at Natal, South Africa throughout the 1930s. Natals' strange visitor also left large droppings on the beach, but DNA testing did not exist in those days and the samples were not preserved. Suggestions that the prowler might have been a living dinosaur were met with ridicule.

Jump forward to February 1948, exact date unknown. A young couple parked on the beach at Clearwater, Florida saw a monster rising from the surf and fled to warn police. Officers found a line of three-toed footprints in the sand, but took no photographs before the tide erased them. More tracks were found next morning, at the same location, but were subsequently wiped out by the waves.

On March 6, 1948, a third line of three-toed tracks appeared on a different beach, a mile and a half from the original site, and traversing 100 yards. More footprints surfaced on Dan's Island, on March 20, and a 350-yard trail was found on April 3 at Indian Rocks, 10 miles south of Clearwater. Further south, beachcombers found a line of identical tracks that stretched for three miles, on April 8.

To that point, no one had seen Old Three Toes, but that changed on July 25. Pilots John Milner and George Orfanides were flying over Hog Island (now Caladesi Island) when they glanced down and saw a strange creature swimming 200 ft. offshore. It was about 15 ft. long, with a "very hairy body, a heavy blunt head and back legs like an alligator but much heavier. The tail [was] long and blunt." Rushing back to their airstrip, they found two friends and circled back in time for all four men to see the beast swimming in crystal-clear water. Before it sank out of sight, Milner noted that it had four legs and that it held the front pair "pressed under the body most of the time."

Another sighting occurred in August, though it was not reported until November. Two Wisconsin tourists were fishing from a boat at Tarpon Springs when they saw a large gray object on shore. At first, they thought it was a tent, but then it rose and waddled toward the surf. The witnesses described it as "having a head like a rhinoceros but with no neck. It sort of slowed into its narrow shoulders. It was gray and covered with short thick fur. It had short, very thick legs and huge feet, and from its shoulders hung two flippers. It didn't run into the water, or dive in; it sort of slid in half sideways."

Further north, near Chiefland, in the autumn, picnickers from a local church saw "a dome-shaped, rough and knobby object" swimming in the Suwannee River. The last known set of three-toed footprints was found near Suwannee Gables on October 21, 1948—and then, Old Three Toes vanished.

In November, the *New York Herald Tribune* sent naturalist Ivan Sanderson to investigate the mystery. He examined 242 of the creature's footprints, measured them precisely, and filed a 53-page report on his findings, noting that the right and left footprints were separated by 15 in., while the creature had a 31-in. stride. Sanderson's report advised that:

> The footprints were impressed into the ground to varying depths according to the nature of the soil. . . . One in soft sand . . . was at least two inches deep all over; those in firm mud were about an inch and a half deep in the middle of the ball of the foot; on loamy soil they appeared to have been pressed to a depth of about three quarters of an inch. . . . We were told by several people who had observed the tracks when fresh—and these included the local police—that the imprints were originally clearly defined on the hardest sand, although we were unable to make any impression on this by stamping or even throwing a 35-pound lead model of the imprints down upon it from a height of three feet.

Sanderson concluded his research by consulting highway engineers, who told him that "if made by a man, either with devices strapped to his feet or on stilts," footprints of the recorded depth would require "a ton on each leg" as the "absolute minimum" weight. Meanwhile, Sanderson's measurement of individual tracks showed movement of the different toes where footprints crossed uneven ground or climbed hillsides. In some cases he found that "the middle toe could on occasion be held up by a root while the outer and inner toes not only reached the ground but gouged deep claw marks into its surface. This is manifestly impossible with any rigid device."

Journalists either forgot or ignored that report in June 1988, when Florida resident Tony Signorini told the *St. Petersburg Times* that he and a friend (who had died in the meantime) faked the three-toed tracks with a pair of cast-iron boots weighing 30 lbs. each. As Signorini described the process, "I would just swing my leg back and forth and give a big hop. The weight of the feet would carry me. They were heavy enough to sink down in the sand."

Reporters later claimed that a pair of iron feet, displayed by Signorini, perfectly matched tracks found on Clearwater's beach in March 1948.

The mystery was solved. Or, was it?

In their rush to break the story, reporters failed to do their homework. None realized that Signorini's tale contradicted both Sanderson's measurements and the opinion of professional engineers recorded 40 years earlier. Aside from the issue of weight, Signorini's tale of hopping on a beach failed to explain hundreds of prints found in other locations, and his cast-iron feet did not have flexible toes. Finally, the various eyewitnesses could hardly have mistaken Tony Signorini for a 15-ft. creature resembling a hairy rhinoceros.

Clearly, Signorini did not make *all* of the footprints found in 1948—so, what did? Ivan Sanderson, writing in 1967, suggested that Old Three Toes might have been a giant bird, similar in form to the prehistoric narrow-flippered penguin whose fossil remains have been found in New Zealand and Antarctica. Estimates of its maximum height range from 5 to 7 ft., but the species is presumed extinct, with its most recent fossils dated 23–28 million years old. We need hardly mention that no penguin known to science resembles the creatures seen by witnesses in Florida in 1948.

The mystery of Old Three Toes endures.

Further Reading: Newton, M. *Florida's Unexpected Wildlife*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), pp. 56–66.

POPOBAWA

The Zanzibar Archipelago consists of two main islands, Zanzibar (also called Unguja) and Pemba, plus the smaller islands of Bawe, Chapwani, Chumbe, Mnemba, Misali, and Prison Island, and is located off the coast of Tanzania, in the Indian Ocean. More than a million people inhabit the island chain, which is governed in equal parts by a semi-autonomous government (supervised from Tanzania) and leaders of the conservative Sunni branch of the Muslim faith. Surveys of Zanzibar report that 86 percent of all men and 71 percent of its women can read and write, but educational levels vary widely based on class and income, and many superstitions persist.

One odd creature described by some Zanzibar natives is the *popobawa* ("bat-wing," in Swahili), an apparent combination of North America's Batsquatch and India's vicious Monkey Man. In fact, however, the popobawa is worse than either, portrayed by its alleged victims as a winged ape that invades homes by night, sexually assaulting residents in their own beds. Stranger still, according to supposed survivors of such incidents, victims are always male.

Aboriginal legends worldwide portray apelike creatures that kidnap human females to be their mates; the behavior is linked to North America's Bigfoot, the Himalayan Yeti, and other unidentified primates from South America to Africa and Southeast Asia. On rare occasions, male baboons and chimpanzees have demonstrated sexual aggression toward women, but popular tales of gorillas snatching human mates from villages or safaris are now dismissed by scientists as total fiction. Nonetheless, stories of the popobawa's bedroom raids persist from Zanzibar, with serial attacks reported frequently between 2001 and 2007.

Unlike most African cryptids, the popobawa has no longstanding tradition rooted in prehistoric art or sightings logged by European explorers from the 18th and 19th centuries.

In fact, the most common tale claims that, in the 1960s, a tribal elder angered by his neighbors conjuring up a brutal genie to wreak vengeance upon them. The legend says that he lost control of his creation, which became the night-prowling popobawa. Local outbreaks of popobawa panic were noted from 1970 through the 1980s, but the first well-publicized rash of complaints came in 1995, spanning the archipelago's main islands, then crossing the Zanzibar Strait to plague Dar es Salaam and other coastal cities of mainland Tanzania. Perhaps significantly, these incidents coincided with elections marked by violence in the streets.

One victim from that year, a farmer named Mjaka Hamad, denied belief in ghosts or demons, yet insisted that he was a victim of the popobawa. He thought it was a dream at first, he said, but then, as he told reporters, "I could feel it, something pressing on me. I couldn't imagine what sort of thing was happening to me. You feel as if you are screaming with no voice. It was just like a dream but then I was thinking it was this popobawa and he had come to do something terrible to me, something sexual. I don't believe in spirits so maybe that's why it attacked me. Maybe it will attack anybody who doesn't believe."

Further popobawa outbreaks were publicized worldwide in 2000, 2001, and 2007—when reports once again spread from the Zanzibar islands to Dar es Salaam. As with India's Monkey Man, descriptions of the popobawa vary from one witness to the next, including claims that it is a ghost, an ogre, or a dwarf Cyclops. A consistent feature is the monster's bat-like wings, and many witnesses describe the predator's foul odor, sometimes accompanied by puffs of smoke. Many reported that the popobawa spoke to them, threatening repeated attacks if they did not tell their neighbors what had happened to them.

Clearly, *something* had happened. Throughout Zanzibar, physicians have treated supposed popobawa victims for injuries including broken ribs and large bruises. Were the injuries self-inflicted, either accidentally or deliberately? The victims deny it, but no one else has witnessed the popobawa in action. Still, it inspires widespread panic. Whole families sometimes sleep with their arms linked to ward off attacks—often outside their homes—and a mentally ill man was killed by a mob after claiming that he was the night-flying demon.

While thousands of children have been frightened by the flying monkeys depicted in the movie *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), science does not recognize any winged primates. The only witnesses to popobawa raids are the creature's supposed victims, and their physical wounds are the only evidence of its existence—if they prove anything. Still, the phenomenon fascinates theorists, who have proposed several explanations. These include:

- Ancestral memories of slavery: Arab slavers ran Zanzibar from 1698 until British forces seized control of the islands and abolished slave-trading in 1873. In 2004, author David Parkin suggested that popobawa panics represented "an articulated social memory of the horrors of slavery," incorporating genie legends from early Arab inhabitants. Why the symptoms waited nearly 100 years to emerge remains unexplained.
- Response to political crises: A popobawa outbreak in 1972 followed the assassination of Zanzibar's first president, Abeid Amani Karume, by political rivals. Further panics erupted during or shortly after the violent elections of 1995 and 2000. However, no such incidents preceded the reports of popobawa attacks in 2001 and 2007, when no elections were held.

- Religious superstition: In 1971, villagers on Pemba claimed that a popobawa had possessed a local girl, who delivered the demon's orders in a deep male voice, accompanied by rattling sounds from nearby rooftops. Many Zanzibar residents believe in magic, sacrificing goats or placing charms at the base of fig trees to bring good luck, and practice exorcisms on suspected victims of possession. Psychologists agree that deeply religious or superstitious people may imagine impossible events, or even die from curses placed upon them by witch doctors. Still, it seems that many popobawa victims are skeptics who deny any supernatural beliefs—and who claim the popobawa targeted them for precisely that reason, to make them believers.
- Mythology translated into action: Most cultures have some variation of ancient legends involving incubi or succubi, demons that visit victims in their sleep to seduce them with illicit sex. An incubus (from the Latin *incubo,* "I lie on top") is normally a male demon that visits women, while a succubus (from *succubo,* "I lie below") preys on men, often tempting celibate monks. It is rare, but not unknown, for an incubus to victimize men. Those who believe strongly enough in such mythical creatures may suffer illness or death, generally attributed to exhaustion from terrified avoidance of sleep.
- Night terrors: Night terrors are hallucinations normally occurring in a state of hypnagogia, between sleep and waking. They are distinguished from nightmares, which, like most other dreams, occur during the REM (rapid eye movement) stage of sleep. Night terrors generally strike NREM (non-rapid eye movement) sleep, also described by scientists as "dreamless" sleep. While this explanation seems to make sense, critics note four major problems: (1) Children are the most common victims of night terrors, while the popobawa prefers adults; (2) adult victims of night terrors frequently suffer from hypoglycemia (low blood-sugar levels) or use opiate drugs, but no such symptoms are reported for popobawa victims; (3) most night-terror victims recall no details of the incidents, while popobawa victims furnish explicit descriptions of the attacks; and (4) many night-terror sufferers cannot be awakened during the attacks, but rather fall back into normal sleep before waking short of breath and disoriented.

Further Reading: Radford, B. "Popobawa!" *Fortean Times* 241 (November 2008): 34–39.

STELLER'S SEA APE

Georg Wilhelm Steller (1709–46) was a German botanist, zoologist, and physician who joined the staff of Russia's Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1734. Four years later, as a member of explorer Vitus Bering's Second Kamchatka Expedition, Steller embarked on a five-year adventure that claimed Bering's life and left the party shipwrecked on a formerly uncharted island from 1741 to 1743. Steller survived the ordeal and discovered several new species of wildlife, including Steller's jay, Steller's eider, Steller's sea eagle, Steller's sea lion, and Steller's sea cow (see section 3), which were named in his honor. He described the animals in a book, *The Beasts of the Sea,* which also included a strange creature whose existence remains controversial.

Steller saw the beast in question on August 10, 1741, and observed it for two hours in calm waters near Alaska's Shumagin Islands. He described the creature:

> It was about two Russian ells [5 ft.] in length; the head was like a dog's, with pointed erect ears. From the upper and lower lips on both sides whiskers hung down which made it look almost like a Chinaman. The eyes were large; the body was longish round and thick, tapering gradually towards the tail. The skin seemed thickly covered with hair, of a gray color on the back, but reddish white on the belly; in the water, however, the whole animal appeared entirely reddish and cow-colored. The tail was divided into two fins, of which the upper, as in the case of sharks, was twice as large as the lower. Nothing struck me more surprising than the fact that neither forefeet as in the marine amphibians nor, in their stead, fins were to be seen. . . . At times it came so near to the ship that it could have been touched with a pole, but as soon as anybody stirred it moved away a little further. It could raise itself one-third of its length out of the water exactly like a man, and sometimes it remained in this position for several minutes.

Steller tried to shoot the creature with a musket, but he missed twice and drove it away. He later compared it to a Danish sea ape, as described by Swiss naturalist Konrad von Gesner (1506–65) in his *History of Animals*. Steller never saw the animal again, nor, as far as we know, has anyone else.

No mammal known to science, at sea or ashore, resembles the creature that Steller called *Simia marina* ("sea ape," in Latin). All known mammals have four limbs, and no aquatic species has vertical tailfins like those of a shark. Speculation concerning the sea ape's identity continues more than 250 years after Steller's description was published. Suggested explanations include:

- A hoax: Skeptics note that the daily log of Steller's ship did not record the sea ape sighting; neither was it mentioned in Steller's report to the Russian government, filed in 1742. It appeared for the first time in his *Beasts of the Sea,* published five years after Steller's death. Furthermore, when Dr. F. A. Golder translated Steller's book into English, he reviewed von Gesner's *History of Animals* and could find no creature resembling Steller's sea ape. These facts prompt some critics to suggest that Steller imagined the incident or mistook some common creature for an unknown cryptid. Against that argument, we have the fact that every other species mentioned in Steller's book, including several previously unknown to science, was accurately described.
- A northern fur seal: Steller biographers Leonard Stejneger (1936) and Dean Littlepage (2006) agree on this solution to the riddle, noting that the forelimbs of the fur seal are set far enough back on the torso to pass unobserved in the water, while the shark-like tail might be the seal's hind flippers. Adult females reach 5 ft. in length, while males grow to 7 ft. Northern fur seals also have long, conspicuous ears, but they do not stand upright as Steller described. Some theorists suggest that Steller saw a *deformed* fur seal, but as author Corey Ford noted in 1966, both Steller and the crewmen aboard his ship were familiar with various species of seals. It seems unlikely they could watch a seal for two full hours and mistake it for an unknown animal.
- A stray Hawaiian monk seal: Peter Bridges, writing in 1985, claimed that "most people think" Steller mistook a member of this species for his sea ape. In fact, however, male monk seals average 7 ft. in length, while females average 8 ft. They have no visible external ears, though Bridges fails to explain how one of these warm-water Pacific seals might find its way to the icy Bering Strait, between Russia and Alaska.

- A sea otter: These marine mammals inhabit the region where Steller recorded his sighting, and large specimens may reach 5 ft. in length, but Steller himself published the first scientific description of sea otters in his *Beasts of the Sea*. It seems improbable that he would first identify the species and then confuse it with another completely different animal.
- An unknown species of leopard seal: Proposed by Dr. Roy Mackal in 1980, this theory has several flaws. First, as Mackal admits, leopard seals are among the earless species that do not conform to Steller's description of the sea ape. Second, the only leopard seals known to science inhabit the cold seas surrounding Antarctica, literally on the opposite side of the globe from Alaska. Finally, as the second-largest seal species (after the southern elephant seal), adult leopard seals range from 8 to 11 ft. long.
- A young sea serpent: Some researchers believe Steller saw a juvenile specimen of the longneck sea-serpent species hypothetically described by Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans in 1968. Heuvelmans thought the creature in question as actually an unknown species of seal, but its existence remains unproven.

While speculating on the sea ape's identity, Roy Mackal surmised that it might be identical to a marine cryptid known among Alaskan Inuit tribesmen as *pal rai yuk* (on Nunivak Island) or *tizheruk* (on King Island). According to Dr. John White, who interviewed multiple witnesses, the beasts have snake-like heads mounted on necks that rise 7–8 ft. above the sea's surface. More often seen in bays than on the open sea, the pal rai yuk or tizheruk often appears when fishermen rap on the hulls of their boats, but the trick may be dangerous, since the animals sometimes attack and kill humans. Once again, Mackal surmises that the beasts described are unknown leopard seals, but no seals recognized by science have such elongated necks.

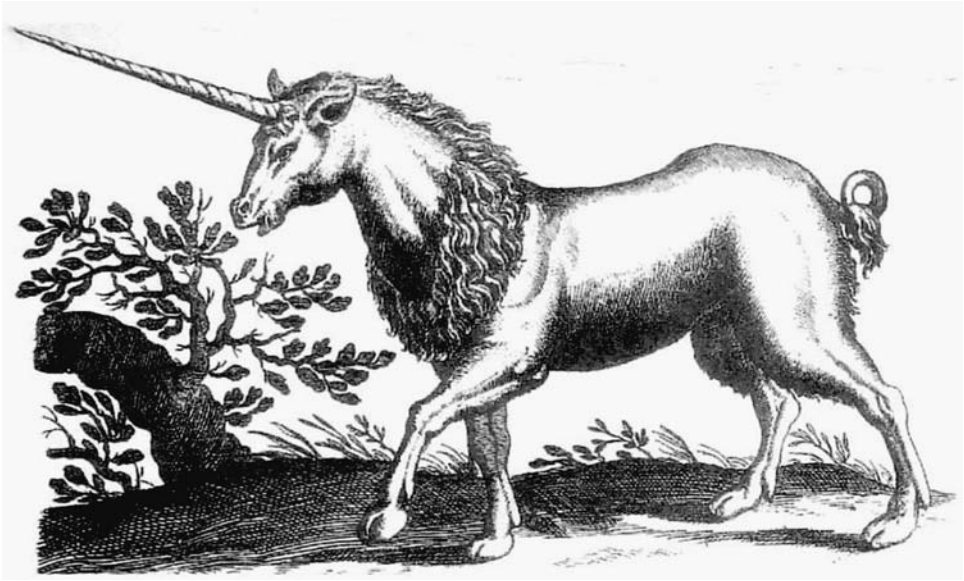
Further Reading: Mackal, R. *Searching for Hidden Animals*, (London: Cadogan Books, 1980), pp. 1–16, 26–32.

UNICORNS

The unicorn ("one-horn," in Latin) is a legendary animal resembling a horse, but with a single horn protruding from its forehead. Some ancient descriptions of unicorns add a goat-like beard, a tail resembling a lion's, and cloven hooves like those of a cow or deer. Many legends invest unicorn blood or their severed horns with magical powers of healing.

Ancient references to unicorns appear in the *King James Bible*, in verses including Numbers 23:22 and 24:8, Deuteronomy 33:17, Job 39:9–12, and Psalms 22:21 and 29:6, but more recent translations replace the word "unicorn" with "wild ox." Greek mythology, meanwhile, omits mention of unicorns, but the creatures are found in ancient texts on natural history, demonstrating that Greek scholars accepted unicorns as creatures of flesh-and-blood reality. Ctesias of Cnidus, writing around 397 B.C.E., described unicorns as a species of wild donkey found in India. Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) believed there were *two* kinds of unicorn, the Indian ass and the oryx, a large antelope with has two horns.

Roman author Pliny the Elder (23–79 C.E.) accepted the two species described by Aristotle, while adding an Indian beast called the *monoceros* ("one-horned," in Greek), which had the head of a stag, a horse's body, an elephant's feet, and the tail of a boar. Its single horn



Unicorns have been reported throughout the world, from ancient times. (Author's collection)

was black and measured 18 in. long, on average. Claudius Aelianus (175–235) claimed that a similar beast, known as the *cartazonon,* lived somewhere north of the Himalayan Mountains, in the region of modern-day Tibet.

Later authors confirmed the existence of unicorns throughout Africa and Asia. Marco Polo (1254–1324) described a Chinese species "scarcely smaller than elephants," covered with "the hair of a buffalo," and allegedly saw one on the island of Java. In 1503, Lewes Vertomannus visited Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia) and claimed that unicorns were kept in a local temple. John Leo (writing in 1526) and Jobus Ludolphus (1681) said that a unicorn called *arucharis* lived in Ethiopia's mountains. Portuguese priest Jerome Lobo found unicorns resembling beautiful horses in Ethiopia, in 1622. Hungarian author Johann Greuber (1623–80) reported both the monoceros and a rhinoceros inhabiting Tibet and China. John Bell, crossing Siberia in 1719, interviewed a Russian hunter who said he had killed and eaten a unicorn six years earlier.

While some of these authors claimed personal unicorn sightings, others simply recorded stories told by local natives. Still, between the 14th and 20th centuries, multiple eyewitnesses reported meetings with unicorns at various worldwide locations. The cases include:

- *1389:* A German priest, John of Hesse, saw a captive unicorn during a pilgrimage to Palestine.
- *1415:* Chinese emperor Yung Loh received a unicorn as a gift from Indian envoys. He called the creature a *Ki-lin.*
- *1483:* Felix Fabri and other pilgrims to the Holy Land saw a large unicorn near Mount Sinai.

- *1503:* Italian traveler Ludovico Barthema saw cattle in Ethiopia that boasted single 3-in. horns protruding from their foreheads.
- *1535:* Portuguese diplomat John Bermudez saw wild unicorns the size of donkeys in Ethiopia.
- *1539:* Friar Marcus of Nizza, seeking the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola (in present-day New Mexico), met native tribesmen who possessed the hide and horn of a unicorn larger than an ox.
- *1564:* British explorer Sir John Hawkins visited Florida, reporting that natives wore fragments of unicorn horns on necklaces.
- *1567:* Vincent Le Blanc began a tour of Europe and Asia, returning to claim unicorn sightings at Escurial (in Spain), Mecca, and in India.
- *1676:* A German physician, Dr. Paul Ludwig Sachs, published an article claiming that unicorns were real and properly known as narwhals, the actual name of an Arctic whale that displays a protruding tusk up to 10 ft. long. Some individuals, approximately one in every 500, grow double tusks.
- *1783:* Swedish naturalist Anders Sparrmann reported that unicorns were commonly seen around the South Africa's Cape of Good Hope.
- *1801:* Captain Samuel Turner, a British diplomat stationed in Tibet during 1783, published a description of a unicorn owned by the Rajah of Bhutan.
- *1817:* French geographer Victor Malte-Brun reported unicorn sightings from various parts of Africa.
- *1820:* Major Latter, a British army officer stationed in Nepal, sent London's *Quarterly Magazine* a description of "fierce and extremely wild" unicorns found in Tibet.
- *1843:* F. Fresnel, a French diplomat stationed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, reported that Arab hunters often killed unicorns around Darfur, in nearby Sudan.
- *1845:* British naturalist Charles Hamilton Smith collected eyewitness reports and drawings of unicorns from South Africa.
- *1848:* Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, a German botanist and geographer, reported the existence of a unicorn known as *a'nasa* in the Kurdufan district of central Sudan.
- *1852:* Bushmen in South Africa described their encounters with unicorns to Sir Francis Galton, a British explorer and half-cousin to Charles Darwin.
- *1862:* Dr. Wilfred Baikie, a Scottish explorer, reported widespread native belief in unicorns throughout Africa, but failed to locate a unicorn skull allegedly preserved by Bonú tribesmen in the area of present-day Nigeria.
- *1906:* Two single-horned rams imported from Nepal were publicly displayed at London's zoo.

Various explanations have been advanced for unicorn sightings. Aside from narwhals, which are sometimes washed ashore and die stranded on beaches, popular theories include the following:

- *Freaks of nature.* Domestic goats are sometimes born with their two horns fused into one and might be mistaken—or deliberately misrepresented—as members of a new spe-

cies. The same deformity may also occur in other horned animals, such as the roe deer with a single horn in the middle of its forehead found roaming an Italian wildlife preserve in June 2008.

- *Man-made unicorns.* Showman P. T. Barnum (1810–91) displayed a fraudulent unicorn skeleton in one of his sideshows, and various hoaxers have produced living unicorns by surgically altering the horn-buds of very young cattle and goats. This process may explain the rams displayed in London during 1906, and was certainly the case when Dr. Franklin Dove created a single-horned bull at the University of Maine, in 1933. Beginning in 1977, self-styled wizard and unicorn breeder Timothy Zell (also known as Oberon Zell-Ravenheart) produced a series of single-horned goats. Others have displayed similar living creations at Renaissance fairs throughout the United States.
- *Elands.* These African antelopes derive their name from the Dutch word for moose. Two species are recognized by science. The giant eland (with two subspecies) normally inhabits Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Senegal, and Sudan. Large males may approach 10 ft. in length, stand nearly 6 ft. tall at the shoulder, and weigh more than 1,900 lbs. The smaller common (or southern) eland lives throughout eastern and southern Africa. Large specimens may stand 4 ft., 6 in. tall at the shoulder and weigh 1,700 lbs. Both species sport twin spiral horns, often more than 2 ft. long, but when seen in profile from a distance may appear to be one-horned.
- *Rhinoceroses.* Science recognizes five living species of rhinoceros, all native to Africa and Asia. All are large, ranging in size from Sumatran rhino (10 ft., 4 in. long, 4 ft., 4 in. tall, and 2,200 lbs.) to the white rhino of Africa (13 ft., 11 in. long, 6 ft. tall, and 10,000 lbs.). Author Peter Costello believes that the African unicorn reported by British traveler Winwood Reade in 1862 was a white rhino, but that species and the African black rhino both have two horns, a long one that may reach 59 in. and a much smaller, second horn (that might pass unnoticed from a distance). Two Asian species, the Indian and Javan rhinos, are both single-horned. The horns of Indian rhinos may reach 40 in., while those of Javan rhinos normally do not exceed 10 in. Female Javan rhinos often have no horns.
- *Prehistoric creatures.* Author Willy Ley (1906–69) suggested that unicorn legends might spring from the memories of early humans who encountered and hunted the *elasmotherium,* a prehistoric rhinoceros whose fossils have been found from southern Russia and Ukraine to eastern China. The elasmotherium reached lengths of 26 ft., stood 6 ft., 7 in. tall, and weighed about 11,000 lbs. Its massive horn grew to 6 ft., 6 in. long. Paleontologists contend that the last elasmotherium died out around 800,000 years ago, and thus could not account for sightings of live unicorns in historical times. Fossils of single-horned dinosaurs such as *monoclonius* might also encourage unicorn legends, although the first known specimen was not discovered until 1876, in Montana.

Further Reading: Costello, P. *The Magic Zoo,* (London: Sphere Books, 1979), pp. 94–103; Shepard, O. *The Lore of the Unicorn.* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930).

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WHO'S WHO IN CRYPTOZOOLOGY

RESEARCHERS

Peter Byrne (1926–): American Bigfoot researcher

Loren Coleman (1947–): American cryptozoologist-author

René Dahinden (1930–2001): Swiss-Canadian Bigfoot hunter

Tim Dinsdale (1924–87): Loch Ness researcher

Jonathan Downes (1959–): founder of the Centre for Fortean Zoology

Richard Freeman (1970–): British cryptozoologist-author

John Green (1927–): Canadian Bigfoot-Yeti researcher

Richard Greenwell (1942–2005): British-American cryptozoologist

Mark Hall (1946–): Cryptozoology author/researcher

Bernard Heuvelmans (1916–2001): Father of cryptozoology

Marie-Jeanne Kauffman (1919–): French-Russian Yeti researcher

John Kirk III (1955–): Canadian founder of the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club

Grover Krantz (1931–2002): Anthropologist and Bigfoot researcher

Paul LeBlond (1938–): Oceanographer and sea serpent researcher

Roy Mackal (1925–): Biologist and cryptozoologist

Ivan Mackerle (1942–): Czech cryptozoologist

Jordi Magraner (1967–2002): Spanish researcher of unknown primates

Debbie Martyr (1958–): British orang pendek researcher

Jeffrey Meldrum (1958–): Anthropologist and Bigfoot researcher

Darren Naish (1975–): Vertebrate paleontologist and cryptozoology researcher

Antoon Oudemans (1858–1943): zoologist and "sea serpent" researcher
Roger Patterson (1933–72): Bigfoot researcher
Boris Porshnev (1905–72): Russian Yeti researcher
Michel Raynal (1955–): French physicist and cryptozoologist
Nick Redfern (1964–): British-American author/researcher
Robert Rines (1923–): Loch Ness researcher, founder of the Academy of Applied Science
Ivan Sanderson (1911–73): Naturalist and author
Adrian Shine (1950–): Loch Ness researcher
Karl Shuker (1959–): British cryptozoologist and author
Tom Slick Jr. (1916–62): Oilman and amateur cryptozoologist
Jan-Ove Sundberg (1947–): Controversial Norwegian lake monster researcher
Autumn Williams (1973–): Bigfoot researcher

ORGANIZATIONS

Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization: http://www.bfro.net
British Big Cats Society: http://www.britishbigcats.org
British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club: http://www.bcscc.ca
Centre for Fortean Zoology: http://www.cfz.org.uk
Eastern Puma Research Network: http://www.easternpumaresearch.com
Global Underwater Search Team: http://www.cryptozoology.st
Gulf Coast Bigfoot Research Organization: http://www.gcbro.com

GLOSSARY

Amphibians—Ectothermic vertebrates that lay eggs in water

Anthropology—The study of human beings

Apes—Large, tailless Old World primates

Aquatic—Living in water

Arachnids—Eight-legged, wingless arthropods

Arachnology—The study of arachnids

Arboreal—Tree-dwelling

Arthropods—Invertebrates with segmented bodies and legs

Avian—Characteristic of birds

Bats—Winged mammals capable of true flight

Biology—The study of living things

Biped—A creature that walks on two legs

Birds—Endothermic vertebrates with feathers

Botany—The study of plants

Canid—Any member of the dog family ("canine" is an adjective)

Cannibals—Creatures who eat members of their own species

Carnivores—Meat-eaters

Cephalopods—Mollusks with arms or tentacles

Cetaceans—Aquatic mammals including whales, dolphins, and porpoises

Cryptids—Hidden animals, the subjects of cryptozoology

Cryptozoology—The study of hidden animals

Diurnal—Active in daylight

DNA—Genetic material useful in identifying species

Dracontology—The study of aquatic cryptids

Ectotherms—Cold-blooded animals whose body heat depends on external temperatures

Endotherms—Warm-blooded animals whose body temperature is internally regulated

Entomology—The study of insects

Extinct—No longer living on earth

Extirpated—Wiped out within a defined area

Fangs—Long, pointed teeth, sometimes capable of injecting venom

Felid—Any member of the cat family

Feral—Domesticated animals reverted to a wild state

Fish—Aquatic vertebrates, usually ectothermic and scaly

Fossils—Ancient remains preserved in stone

Fossorial—Living underground

Giant—A creature of abnormally large size

Habitat—An animal's natural environment

Herbivores—Plant-eaters

Herpetology—The study of amphibians and reptiles

Herpsetids—Mammals including mongooses and meerkats

Hominids—Any of the great apes, including humans

Hominology—The study of unclassified primates

Hydrobiology—The study of aquatic life

Ichthyology—The study of fish

Insects—Six-legged arthropods, often with wings

Insectivores—Insect-eaters

Invertebrates—Animals without backbones

Limnology—The study of inland waters (lakes, rivers, etc.)

Malacology—The study of mollusks

Mammalogy—The study of mammals

Mammals—Vertebrates that produce milk for their offspring

Marine—Living in salt water (oceans and seas)

Marine biology—The study of marine life

Marsupials—Mammals that carry their infant offspring in pouches

Mollusks—Invertebrates with soft, unsegmented bodies, often protected by shells

Monkeys—Primates of the Old and New Worlds, usually smaller than apes and possessing tails

Monotremes—Egg-laying mammals

Mustelids—Mammals of the weasel family, including badgers, ferrets, martens, mink, otters, and wolverines

Nocturnal—Active at night

Oceanography—The study of oceans and seas

Omnivores—Eaters of both meat and plants

Ornithology—The study of birds

Oviparous—Egg-laying

Paleontology—Study of prehistoric life forms via fossils

Paranormal—Lacking a clear scientific explanation

Pinnipeds—Fin-footed semi-aquatic mammals

Pongids—Anthropoid apes, including chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans

Predators—Creatures that hunt other creatures for food

Prehistoric—Existing before written history

Prey—Creatures hunted and eaten by others

Primates—Members of the order including lemurs, monkeys, apes, and humans

Procyonids—New World mammals including raccoons, coatis, and kinkajous

Pygmy—In zoology, an unusually small creature

Quadruped—A creature that walks on four legs

Raptors—Birds of prey

Relict—Surviving member of an ancient species

Reptiles—Cold-blooded vertebrates with scaly skin

Rodents—The largest order of mammals by number of species, including mice, rats, gophers, chipmunks, squirrels, porcupines, beavers, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas, prairie dogs, and groundhogs

Scat—Feces

Scavengers—Eaters of dead and decaying matter

Selachians—Cartilaginous fish, including sharks, rays, and skates

Sirenians—Aquatic herbivorous mammals, including dugongs and manatees

Species—A group of organisms capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring

Spoor—Signs or traces used in tracking animals

Subspecies—A diversified form of a primary species

Talons—Claws, usually on birds of prey

Taxonomy—Classification, as of living things

Terrestrial—Living on land

Ungulates—Mammals with hooves

Venom—A toxin injected by animals for defense or hunting

Vertebrates—Animals with backbones

Viverrids—Old World mammals including the civets, genets, and binturong

Viviparous—Giving birth to live young

Xenarthrans—A group of mammals including aardvarks, anteaters, and sloths

Zoology—The study of animal life

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